

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March XX, 2017

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro,

We want to thank the Subcommittee for your continued support and recognition of Health Centers as a longstanding bipartisan solution to the primary care access problems facing this country. **During the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Appropriations process, we respectfully request that the Subcommittee continue to recognize Health Centers as providers of high quality, cost-effective primary care and that you work to ensure the continuation of the innovative, high-value health center model of care within the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies legislation for FY2018.**

Since the first health centers opened their doors more than fifty years ago, health centers have provided primary care, dental, behavioral, pharmacy, vision and a variety of complementary services to America's most vulnerable patients and communities. Today, thanks to longstanding bipartisan support, well over 1,400 health center organizations serve nearly 10,000 urban and rural communities nationwide. Health Centers are the health care home for over 25 million patients, including 7.6 million children and nearly 300,000 veterans. Health Centers employ more than 180,000 Americans, and generate billions of dollars both in economic impact and overall cost-savings for the health care system.

Health Centers have continually proven to be a worthwhile investment by delivering high quality, affordable health care, and the demand for health center services has grown in recent years. Combined with the investments made on a bipartisan basis through the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization of 2015 (MACRA), annual appropriations for the Health Centers Program have been critical to the operations of health centers nationwide as they meet that demand. With MACRA's Health Centers Fund extension set to expire this fall, we urge you to work with your colleagues on other committees of jurisdiction to keep funding for Health Centers whole in FY18. Without access to primary care, many people, including the chronically ill, delay seeking health care until they are seriously ill, leading to higher costs and worse health outcomes. The Health Center model is designed to address this and other health challenges by fostering innovation and high-value care at the community level.

As Congress works to improve access to care, reduce health care expenditures, and promote patient-centered solutions to our health care challenges, we urge the Subcommittee to continue to support Health Centers, which have a proven track record of success. Thank you for your continued support of the vital role Health Centers play in preserving and expanding access to care in the communities they serve. We ask that as you continue to face difficult choices on budget priorities, that you support this proven and cost-effective model of care.

Sincerely,