*TEMPLATE Member of Congress Floor Speech - Health Center Funding Cliff*

*Mr./Madam Speaker (HOUSE) / Mr./Madam President (SENATE)*

I rise today to call our attention to a health care success story that so many of us here in this body, on both sides of the aisle, agree on. I’m speaking of the role of our nation’s community health centers, who today provide high-quality primary and preventive care to more than 27 million patients in nearly 11,000 communities nationwide.

Unfortunately, I’m also coming to the floor today to highlight the threat that each of our Health Centers faces if we don’t act – and act quickly – to extend critical funding that supports that care. As a strong supporter of our nation’s Health Centers, I’m calling on all of us to work together to extend that funding on a long-term basis.

Our nation’s health centers have been serving low-income, rural and underserved communities for more than fifty years. In that time, and with bipartisan support from this body, they’ve grown, not only in terms of the number of locations and the number of people they care for, but in the breadth of services they provide to their community and in the quality of care that gets provided.

Most health centers now offer integrated services like behavioral health, dental care, and – increasingly – the substance use disorder treatment needed to combat national challenges like the opioid epidemic. It’s this kind of integrated care that leads both to better health outcomes for patients, and to cost-savings, both for the health care system as a whole and for the taxpayer.

In my district, we have XX health center organizations who collectively leverage $XX million in federal investment to serve XX,XXX people at XX locations. (See <http://www.nachc.org/congressional-district-fact-sheets/>) I’ve been to many of these locations, and seen in person what a difference these organizations make in the lives of our neighbors, and in the health of our community.

Two years ago, in this body we voted overwhelmingly to extend funding for CHCs as part of the MACRA legislation. Now that the deadline is upon us again, we must act. I support a long-term extension, for at least five years, so that our CHCs can have the predictability and stability they need to recruit providers, purchase equipment, and plan strategically for how to meet the current and future needs of communities. I strongly support keeping funding levels for CHCs whole, something more than 350 members in both the House and Senate signed letters supporting earlier this year.

Too often we here in Congress let things wait until the last minute, or even until after the last minute. For the sake of our communities and their health, we can’t let that happen. It’s time to fix the Health Center Funding Cliff and invest in a local solution we all know delivers results.

I yield the Floor.