

## Health Centers Still Await Funding

*Health Center Partners of Southern California*

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February 6, 2018 - Were you one of the 10,000 people with a reported case of the flu? What about your mother, father, sister, brother or kids? How'd you feel? Get to the doctor? Did she take care of you and make you feel better? Maybe even prescribe antiviral medications?

Perhaps you were one of the 50,000 who got their flu shot from one of our community health centers. Wasn't it nice to know our hundreds of providers were there to take care of you and help you feel better?

Sneezing, coughing, runny noses, aches, chills and fever are still running rampant through San Diego and community health centers have been on the front lines helping. Community health centers have responded to the flu outbreak just as they do in any public health emergency. **For example, they have:**

- Identified high-risk patients and encouraged them to get a flu shot;
- Provided more than 50,000 flu shots since October, many at no cost;
- Put sick patients first by rescheduling prevention and wellness visits;
- Required influenza vaccine or the wearing of masks for staff;
- Increased public awareness of proper hygiene and treatment, and;
- Completed more than 100,000 visits for flu!



Now, imagine if all this disappeared. Overnight. Poof. No clinical providers to see you and help you get well again. No flu shots. No doctors. No nurse practitioners. No reduced costs medicine. Well, that could be the reality for hundreds of thousands of patients who receive health care in southern California's community health centers, **who are currently serving 1 in 6 San Diegans.**

This is not a new issue. Chances are, you've seen this story on the TV, in the paper or on social media throughout 2017. Yes, this same story. **"Community health centers to lose 70% of federal funding unless Congress acts."** **Sadly, Congress did not act and on September 30, 2017, health center funding expired.** For southern California, this equates to a loss of \$44 million coming into our communities for health care; or *roughly*

120,000 fewer patient visits in a system that cares for almost one million patients every year. To be clear, that could mean that those flu visits don't happen next year. These same care facilities will be shuttered, and thousands of jobs will be forfeited, adding insult to injury. Is that the world we want to live in? Are we okay with this?

On Tuesday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, health center advocates from across the country will, again, be flying into our nation's capital, this time all dressed in red, to make sure our elected officials know that it's a Red Alert for health centers and the patients we serve. **Collectively, the clinicians in Health Center Partners represent San Diego County's 5th largest medical group; and will be crippled if Congress doesn't get in gear and pass legislation that includes stable funding for community health centers in the February 8<sup>th</sup> Continuing Resolution.**

So how does it feel...Congress playing football with your health care? And for what? Do you want ridiculous lines at emergency rooms? Do you want to wait even longer to see a doctor? Is it okay with you for your kids to miss school or for you to miss work?

For fifty years, under both Republican and Democratic leadership, the community health center movement has grown because both sides understood a small investment in local communities, in the right hands, can go a long way to help families. And they were right. Ten million more people now have a regular source of health care, at one of the 1,375 health centers nationwide, than they did a decade ago.

Sadly, partisanship and salacious scandals hog the attention of our legislators – instead of the people they were sent to Washington to represent. In 2017, Congress has shown its inability to govern, run a business or unite the American people. It is now 2018 - an election year. It's time to let your legislators know:

1. This level of inaction is unacceptable and unpatriotic;
2. Health care is a right, and **Congress should reinstate stable federal funding for CHCs and other health extension programs without delay**, and that;
3. They have been put on notice. You'll be watching, and you vote.

Enough is enough! **It's a Red Alert.** Congress has played one too many games with the health and welfare of our community. **#REDALERT4CHCs**

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### **About Health Center Partners of Southern California**

Health Center Partners and its subsidiaries serve as the nexus for its members and partners to transform primary care through the power of innovation and collaboration. Our health policy, public affairs and advocacy efforts enhance the development of and recognition for our members who enrich the patient experience and improve the human condition through access to quality health care and related services for their diverse communities, with an emphasis on low-income and uninsured populations. [www.hcpsocal.org](http://www.hcpsocal.org) @HCPSOCAL