

National Health Center Week Message Points

Talking Points – When Meeting with a Member of Congress

- Thank you for your dedication to improving access to high quality, comprehensive care for all at our nation's community health centers.
- More than 7000 Community Health Centers like this one currently form the backbone of the health care safety net, in communities - small and large, urban and rural - across the United States.
- Community Health Centers care for more than 1 out of every 5 uninsured low-income Americans and provide almost 1 out of every 5 office visits for people covered by Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program.
- Yet, a recent study found that 60 million individuals in the United States are medically disenfranchised, lacking access to primary care services like those provided by Community Health Centers, regardless of insurance coverage.
- The historic investment made in Community Health Centers in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA, the federal stimulus bill) will help our centers to weather the current economic storm. The investments in health center infrastructure will also position our centers to not only survive but thrive in the years to come.
- As the health reform discussion continues, health centers ask you to keep in mind that expanding insurance coverage, while vitally important, does not guarantee access to care, particularly for the medically underserved.
- **The newly insured will need a health care home, and we believe that the continued expansion of the health centers program and a guaranteed stream of funding for this expansion is critical to ensuring the success of the health reform effort.**
- **All individuals should have the choice of a community health center as their health care home and every health center should be appropriately reimbursed for the high-value preventive and primary care it provides.**
- We ask for your continued support of making guaranteed health care **access** a central component of any health reform. Community Health Centers like this one across the country stand ready to bring high-quality, accessible, affordable primary care to every patient and community in this country that needs it.

Talking Points on the Value of the Stimulus Funding and The Need for Health Care Reform

- Stimulus funding for health centers was the right medicine at the right time. The investment allowed health centers to quickly begin responding to increased demand for health care from people across America who are jobless and uninsured, or underinsured, in today's challenged economy.
- In fact, without the stimulus funding... (insert local facts here. What would have happened to YOUR health center without stimulus funding?). Examples: *A health center about to shut its doors in Ohio was able to remain open for patients; a new mobile health van is bringing care to needy children in Colorado; in Nashville, three new clinics will create 27 jobs and provide care to 7,200 new patients.*
- That said – while stimulus funding was the right medicine – it wasn't the cure. The cure is health reform, done right. A long-term solution is needed for the 50 million people who are uninsured and also for the 60 million people who are medically disenfranchised – shut out of preventive and primary care because they can't afford it, don't have insurance or live where providers are scarce or nonexistent. Here the stimulus funding has accelerated the development of health center care that will be so vital to those who will gain insurance coverage, as well as those who will remain uninsured.
- Community Health Centers are key to successful health reform. Comprehensive health reform is urgently needed, particularly as the recession lingers and demand for services is unrelenting. Whatever its final shape, health reform must ensure that people are free to choose Community Health Centers as their "health care homes"; that health centers are adequately reimbursed for their services; and that they have the primary care professionals, the financing and other tools needed to expand their reach.
- While the path to health reform has not lacked for controversy, the simple fact is that this time, the effort in Washington has made further progress than ever before; 4 out of 5 Congressional Committees have approved legislation, and only a few crucial steps remain to achieve final success.
- Health reform is vitally needed, to give all Americans access to affordable coverage AND to a health care home that will care for them and keep them well. This time around, our message should be "Yes we can – yes we MUST!"