**Advocates for Community Health**

**Talking Points**

**Support for the Community Health Center Fund Reauthorization**

**February 2024**

* **Ask:**
	+ Please support as high a level as possible for the Community Health Center Fund Reauthorization and communicate this support to leadership as negotiations continue on a final funding level prior to the fund’s expiration on March 8.
		- $4.4 billion a year for two years was the funding level that passed the House of Representatives as part of the *Lower Costs, More Transparency Act* in December.
		- $5.8 billion a year for three years was the level passed out of the Senate HELP Committee as part of the *Bipartisan Primary Care and Health Workforce Act* in September.
		- Current funding is $4.0 billion a year, which expires on March 8.
* Securing a significant, sustained increase for health centers is one issue that everyone – Democrats and Republicans, Senators and Representatives - can agree on, meaningfully benefiting patients, communities, and our nation’s health.
* With robust, stable, predictable funding, health centers can provide the gold standard of primary care to all who seek it, regardless of ability to pay.
* **Continued uncertainty around the level and duration of a reauthorization of the Community Health Center Fund is already harming health centers and their patients**.

	+ Without the certainty that this Fund will be available in the coming years, it is more difficult to finance large projects or engage in meaningful long-term planning.
	+ Without the backstop of the Community Health Center Fund, health centers would be forced to close sites, lay off staff, and cut back service hours.
* Health centers are currently facing unprecedented financial challenges.

	+ Health centers are facing an ongoing workforce shortage, continued erosion of 340B program savings, and loss of coverage for millions of patients due to Medicaid program redeterminations, which is resulting in declining revenue for health centers.
	+ Health centers are also addressing ongoing mental health and maternal mortality crises and steadily increasing patient populations.
	+ In 2022, community health centers provided comprehensive primary care to a record 30.5 million patients, a 45% increase over the past ten years.
* Community health centers are the best investment you can make in health care.

	+ In 2021, community health centers were estimated to save a total of $25.3 billion for the Medicaid and Medicare programs.[[1]](#footnote-1)
	+ In 2019, community health centers generated $63.4 billion in economic activity, of which $32 billion were indirect economic impacts generated from supporting local businesses.[[2]](#footnote-2)
	+ For every dollar of federal funding invested in community health centers, $11 is generated in total economic activity through increased spending on related health service expenses, food services, transportation, construction, and more.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Background and Context:

* The Community Health Center Fund expires on March 8, along with some other health care and discretionary funding items. Congressional leadership is negotiating a package that could include the CHC Fund reauthorization and other “extenders,” some items related to health care transparency, some of the fiscal year 2024 discretionary funding, and some Medicaid and Medicare policies. We expect leaders will negotiate a CHC Fund level between $4.4B/year (House) and $5.8B/year (Senate), but how this ultimately plays out remains to be seen.
* The *Bipartisan Primary Care and Health Workforce Act* passed out of the HELP Committee by a vote of 14-7 this past September. There are a few sticking points on this legislation that sponsors are working through:
	+ It did not have the support of the HELP Committee Ranking Member, Bill Cassidy (R-LA), when it passed out of Committee, and he remains opposed. We had heard that Republican Leader McConnell shares his concerns.
	+ This was due in part to the process by which this bill was developed and in part to questions on how the bill would be paid for. (When Congress passes legislation that costs money, they need to find an offset elsewhere in the budget to “pay for” the bill)
	+ The bill’s sponsors are working with leadership of other Committees to identify additional offsets for the funding in this legislation.
* In the House, the *Lower Costs, More Transparency Act*, H.R. 5378, funds the Community Health Center Fund at $4.4 billion a year for two years, a 10 percent increase over current levels. This bipartisan legislation was passed by the House on December 11. ACH’s statement in support of this legislation [can be found here](https://advocatesforcommunityhealth.org/advocates-for-community-health-commends-house-on-passage-of-lower-costs-more-transparency-act-and-increased-funding-for-community-health-centers/).
1. Robert Nocon (Kaiser Permanente Bernard J. Tyson School of Medicine). “Testimony on Community Health Centers: Saving Lives, Saving Money before the United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.” (March 02, 2023). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Community Health Centers Are Economic Engines” (National Association of Community Health Centers, October 2020), <https://www.nachc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Economic-Impact-Infographic-2.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Health Centers Provide Cost Effective Care” (National Association of Community Health Centers, July 2015), <http://nachc.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/06/Cost-Effectiveness_FS_2015.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)