**CHC Funding Template Op-Ed**

Amid global upheaval and several national health crises, health centers in [YOUR STATE] are facing challenges that could make it impossible for them to continue providing quality, affordable care to the patients who rely on them.

[The Community Health Center Program](https://bphc.hrsa.gov/about-health-centers) is the country's largest network of primary care providers. It is a key part of our health care safety net, as health centers provide care to all who need it, regardless of insurance status or ability to pay. Over 14,000 community health centers across the United States now serve over 31 million patients, the highest number of patients served by health centers ever recorded.

This national network of community health centers, which relies primarily on federal funding, is more vital now than ever, particularly as the nation grapples with overlapping health, economic, and climate crises that disproportionately impact the underserved communities health centers care for and support. More than 90% of health center patients live at or below 200% of the federal poverty line, and nearly 70% are uninsured or covered by the Medicaid program.

As Congress continues to debate government funding and another government shutdown looms, health centers are facing extraordinary workforce, infrastructure, and financial challenges. Their funding has not kept up with inflation and increasing patient populations. From Fiscal Year 2015 to Fiscal Year 2021, total community health center funding only increased by 11%, while the number of patients served increased by 24%. The health care workforce shortage makes recruiting and retaining staff health difficult, and mental health, substance abuse, and maternal mortality crises are straining centers even further. Health centers cannot continue to do more with less.

Health centers need significant and sustained funding to keep serving their patients. Federal funding for the Community Health Center Trust Fund, originally set to expire on September 30, has been extended several times and now expires on March 8, but this is simply a stopgap measure. Now is the time for Democrats and Republicans to work together to ensure sustained, increased, and stable funding through the Community Health Center Trust Fund.

This investment is crucial for health centers like [name health center here] in [your state] to keep their doors open, provide comprehensive care, retain and build their workforce, and participate in innovative efforts that improve the quality of patient care. Health centers like [name health center here] provide culturally and linguistically appropriate care and are at the frontlines during a local, state, or national emergency.

Health centers are the best investment you can make in health care. In 2021, estimates showed that community health centers [save](https://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Testimony-Nocon-CHCs%202023-0228_Final.pdf)d $25.3 billion in the Medicaid and Medicare programs while providing economic growth to localities. Every dollar of federal funding invested in community health centers generates $11 in total economic activity through increased spending on related health service expenses, food services, transportation, construction, and more.

Right here in [INSERT STATE], community health centers employ [INSERT EMPLOYMENT STATS] and serve as the health care home to [INSERT PATIENT STATS- RURAL, VETERANS, MENTAL HEALTH, ETC] patients.

[Insert relevant patient stories/health center data here]

The uncertainty around federal funding for health centers is unsustainable and hinders their ability to address the unique needs of their patients. I am calling today on Congress to provide increased, sustained funding through the Community Health Center Trust Fund Reauthorization to help our local communities thrive now and into the future, before the fund expires on March 8. We hope that Senators [INSERT YOUR U.S. SENATORS] and Rep. [INSERT YOUR U.S. REPRESENTATIVE(S)] will show their support for a strong reauthorization of the Community Health Center Trust Fund. The time for bold action is now.