



ADVOCATES FOR
COMMUNITY
HEALTH

Statement for the Record
House Committee on the Budget
Hearing: “Reverse the Curse: Skyrocketing Health Care Costs and America’s Fiscal Future”
Wednesday, January 21, 2026 | 10:15 AM ET | 210 Cannon House Office Building

Submitted by: Advocates for Community Health (ACH)
Amanda Pears Kelly, Chief Executive Officer

Dear Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member Boyle, and Members of the Committee:

Advocates for Community Health (ACH) appreciates the opportunity to submit this statement for the record for the House Committee on the Budget’s hearing, “*Reverse the Curse: Skyrocketing Health Care Costs and America’s Fiscal Future.*” ACH is a nonpartisan, membership-based advocacy organization representing community health centers (CHCs), the nation’s largest network of primary care providers delivering care in rural and underserved communities.

As the Committee examines strategies to address rising health care costs and long-term fiscal pressures, we ask that you consider the role of community health centers as a proven, bipartisan solution. For 60 years, health centers have provided high-quality primary care that delivers better outcomes at lower cost for patients, taxpayers, and the health care system as a whole.

Community health centers provide comprehensive primary care services, including maternal, dental, behavioral health, and substance use disorder treatment, and are designed to meet community needs regardless of patients’ ability to pay. In 2024, federally funded health centers served 34 million patients nationwide through nearly 140 million visits across nearly 16,000 service delivery sites. Health center patients are disproportionately low income, with nearly 90 percent living at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, and reach 1 in 5 rural residents and 1 in 15 adults 65 and older, who are more likely to have medically complex and chronic health needs.¹

Despite serving higher-risk populations, evidence shows that care delivered at CHCs reduces federal health care spending. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has found that care delivered at community health centers decreases spending for Medicaid and Medicare beneficiaries by reducing utilization of emergency departments, inpatient hospital care, and specialty services.² Health centers serve approximately one in four Medicaid beneficiaries, yet

¹ <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/data-reporting/program-data/national>.

² Congressional Budget Office. (2024). *CBO’s cost estimates explained, CBO describes its Cost-Estimating Process, Glossary*. <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2024-02/s2840.pdf>.



account for less than three percent of total Medicaid spending,³ Research shows that every \$1 invested in primary care saves \$13 in downstream costs.⁴ Some estimates indicate that care delivered by community health centers generated \$25 billion in combined Medicaid and Medicare savings in 2021 alone.⁵

These cost savings are particularly important as federal health spending continues to rise. In 2024, national health expenditures exceeded \$5 trillion annually, totaling more than \$15,000 per person, with the federal government accounting for the largest share (31%) of total spending.⁶ High health care costs are driven not only by prices, but by preventable illness, unmanaged chronic diseases, and reliance on costlier services and settings. Health centers provide critical access to comprehensive primary care that directly reduces reliance on these higher-cost settings, such as emergency rooms.

Community health centers are also among the most accessible providers and have demonstrated successful outcomes on quality measures across the board. According to a recent survey of health centers, nearly all community health centers offer timely appointments (88%) and expanded hours for patients to receive care (93%).⁷ In 2024, health centers improved outcomes in chronic disease prevention and management, including helping millions of patients achieve controlled hypertension and diabetes, and delivering preventive screenings and nutrition counseling to millions of children. These outcomes are achieved alongside high patient satisfaction, with 97% of health center patients reporting they would recommend their provider to family or friends.⁸ High levels of patient trust and satisfaction are crucial to improving outcomes and reducing preventable high-cost chronic conditions. Therefore, investing in the cost-effective primary care health centers provide is essential to long-term fiscal sustainability.

ACH appreciates the Committee's leadership in examining solutions to curb rising health care costs and secure the country's fiscal future. **We urge lawmakers to view robust and long-term investments in the Health Center Program as a core part of a fiscally responsible health care strategy.** With additional investment, CHCs could dramatically accelerate their impact on patients and their communities. Over a third of Americans do not have access to primary care, which has been shown to prevent and control chronic diseases as well as save money for the health care system.

³ <https://www.nachc.org/resource/community-health-centers-and-medicaid-nachc-policy-paper/#:~:text=CHCs%20Reduce%20Medicaid%20Spending,per%20adult%20patient%20per%20year>.

⁴ Gelmon, S., Wallace, N., Sandberg, B., Petchel, S., Bouranis, N., OHSU & PSU School of Public Health and Mark O. Hatfield School of Government, & Portland State University. (2016). *Implementation of Oregon's PCPCH Program: Exemplary practice and program findings*. <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HPA/dsi-pcpch/Documents/PCPCH-Program-Implementation-Report-Final-Sept-2016.pdf>.

⁵ Nocon, Robert. 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. Retrieved from https://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Testimony-Nocon-CHCs%202023-0228_Final.pdf.

⁶ <https://www.cms.gov/data-research/statistics-trends-and-reports/national-health-expenditure-data/nhe-fact-sheet>

⁷ *Health Center Patient Survey*. (n.d.). <https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-centers/hcps>.

⁸ Community health centers' progress and challenges in meeting patients' essential primary care needs. (2024). [www.commonwealthfund.org. https://doi.org/10.26099/wmta-a282](https://doi.org/10.26099/wmta-a282).



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A bold investment in the Health Center Program would expand access to comprehensive primary care for rural and underserved populations, deliver quality care at lower costs, improve health outcomes for the most complex patients, and reduce unnecessary spending across the health care system. Few federal investments yield comparable returns for taxpayers, patients, and communities alike.

For more information or to discuss this further, please contact:

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