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CLOSING TOMORROW: Bipartisan Community Health Centers Letter

Dear Colleague,

Please join us in sending the following bipartisan letter to leadership asking for critical funding for community health centers (CHCs) in the next COVID-19 response package. This funding will ensure our nation's CHCs can continue to provide life-saving care throughout this crisis.

CHCs are on the frontlines of this pandemic, serving over 29 million patients in all 50 states across nearly 12,000 rural and urban communities. We appreciate that the CARES Act provided \$1.32 billion in direct funding for CHCs, however, we are deeply concerned that those funds are insufficient to address the outsized impact of COVID-19 on CHCs.

Our nation's 1,400 CHCs currently employ over 236,000 workers who are working day and night, putting themselves and their families at risk, to fight on the frontlines of this crisis – often without proper personal protective equipment or adequate supplies. Under the immense pressure from COVID-19, our CHCs are trying to expand their capacity, acquire critical supplies, and increase staffing, all without the income they rely on from regular primary and preventive care visits that have been put on hold during this crisis.

It is estimated that over 6 months, CHCs will suffer 34 million fewer visits, \$7.6 billion in lost revenue, and 100,500 lost jobs if they do not receive financial support. For many CHCs, this revenue loss could ultimately result in the need to close their doors at a time when their life-saving services are critically needed to keep our communities safe during this pandemic.

This letter is supported by the National Association of Community Health Centers.

To cosign this letter, please contact Lauren Toy with Rep. Susie Lee at Lauren.Toy@mail.house.gov. **The deadline to sign on is NOON Friday, April 10, 2020.**

Sincerely,

Susie Lee

LETTER TEXT

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy,

Thank you for your leadership and dedication to addressing the public health and economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. As we prepare a fourth package to mitigate the vast impact of this crisis and ensure critical resources for Americans on the frontlines, we write to recognize the impact of COVID-19 on community health centers (CHCs) and ask for the inclusion of \$7.6 billion in emergency supplemental funding for CHCs in any next COVID-19 relief package. This critical funding for CHCs is essential to meeting the urgent health care needs of underserved communities across our nation.

CHCs serve over 29 million patients in all 50 states across nearly 12,000 medically underserved rural and urban communities. We appreciate that the CARES Act provided \$1.32 billion in supplemental funding for CHCs and that CHCs are eligible to apply for funding under the CARES Act's Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund. However, we are deeply concerned that these funds are insufficient to address the current and growing needs of CHCs across America as COVID-19 continues to spread exponentially every day.

As you know, health care providers are facing an unprecedented crisis as the nation's COVID-19 caseload surges to over 350,000 patients, and CHCs are on the front lines of this fight, especially in our nation's most underserved and vulnerable communities.

Currently, CHCs are facing immense pressure to provide care for the exponentially rising number of patients each day – while enduring critical supply shortages, unmet workforce needs, and an unprecedented volume of cases at once. To respond, facilities have tried to expand their capacity, stock up on supplies, and increase staffing, all without the income they rely on from regular primary and preventive care visits to support their skyrocketing costs.

This decline in visits has resulted in a significant decrease in CHCs' revenue, in turn impacting their operations and employment. It is estimated that this decline will last at least six months, during which CHCs will suffer 34 million fewer visits, \$7.6 billion in lost revenue, and 100,500 lost jobs. For many CHCs, this revenue loss could ultimately result in the need to close their doors.

In addition, our nation's 1,400 CHCs currently employ over 236,000 dedicated health care workers who are currently working day and night, putting themselves and their families at risk, to fight on the frontlines of this crisis – often without proper personal protective equipment or adequate supplies. We must not only ensure these workers get the equipment and supplies they need to continue to work safely, but also ensure CHCs can keep their doors open so these frontline heroes can continue their lifesaving work.

CHCs need urgent financial support to keep their doors open, meet the demands of this public health emergency, and ensure long-term stability to deliver reliable, essential health care to communities across America. Due to this critical need, we urge you to include \$7.6 billion in direct emergency funding for CHCs in the next COVID-19 relief package. This funding should have the flexibility to be used for detection, prevention, and diagnosis of COVID-19, stabilizing essential health services, and addressing revenue losses to help CHCs keep their doors open during this crisis. This funding should be made available immediately upon the next package's

enactment and distributed efficiently to CHCs across the country. Any delay in this funding would have serious consequences, endangering the lives of patients and health care workers.

We appreciate your leadership and persistence in fighting for all Americans during this crisis. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,