

## The Rhode Island Health Center Association Celebrates National Health Center Week 2017

### “Celebrating America’s Health Centers: The Key to Healthier Communities”

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**Providence, RI** – The Rhode Island Health Center Association (RIHCA) and Rhode Island’s community health centers marked National Health Center Week 2017 on Friday with a celebration of the state’s health centers: *The Key to Healthier Communities*. The event was part of a national campaign (August 13-19) to celebrate the mission and accomplishments of America’s health centers over the course of over more than five decades. The statewide celebration, held at the Providence Community Health Centers’ location at Prairie Avenue, recognized the legacy of community health centers nationally and in Rhode Island by honoring Rhode Island’s congressional delegation.

“Rhode Island’s community health centers have been leaders in delivering innovative care that supports the evolving needs of Rhode Island communities. In 2016, they provided high-quality comprehensive primary, behavioral and oral health services to over 164,000 Rhode Islanders.,” said Jane A. Hayward, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Rhode Island Health Center Association. “National Health Center Week is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the clinicians and staff who are key to creating and sustaining healthy communities.”

Together, Rhode Island’s nine community health centers, which include eight federally qualified health centers and one island-based health center, form the largest network of primary care providers in the state, seeing more than 164,000 Rhode Islanders in over 680,000 visits. These community health centers have a long history of providing high-quality, low-cost primary medical, dental and behavioral health care to Rhode Islanders. Rhode Island’s federally qualified health centers serve a unique role in the health care delivery system within the state. Rhode Island has no county government, no municipal health departments, and no public hospitals; they serve as the public primary care delivery system in the state.

“A strong system of health and human services provides a necessary foundation for opportunity and prosperity in Rhode Island,” said Rhode Island Health and Human Services Secretary Eric J. Beane. “Our health centers play a critical role in Rhode Island’s healthcare system, serving over one third of the state’s Medicaid beneficiaries, many of whom have complex medical and social needs. Health centers strengthen our communities, and I am committed to working in partnership with them to improve access to quality care for all Rhode Islanders.”

As a part of the celebration, the Association presented the members of Rhode Island’s congressional delegation with awards for their ongoing support of community health centers.

“Community health centers provide comprehensive, cost-effective, innovative care to patients in Rhode Island and across the nation,” said U.S. Senator Jack Reed, a member of the Appropriations Committee who has championed federal funding to help community health centers serve patients nationwide. “Thanks to Rhode Island’s outstanding community health centers for providing access to quality health care and wellness support for those in need. They help people lead healthier, fuller lives.”

“Community health centers are a lifeline for so many families,” said U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse. “Thousands of Rhode Islanders get high-quality primary care from a community health center, which helps them stay healthy while keeping costs down for everybody. The expansion of

community health centers has been one of the great successes of the Affordable Care Act, and I'm going to keep fighting in Congress to protect all the progress they have made in recent years."

"Tens of thousands of Rhode Islanders rely on community health centers for high-quality, comprehensive care, and we must ensure they have the resources necessary to meet expanding health care needs," said Congressman Jim Langevin. "I am truly honored to receive the Health Center Champion award, and I am proud to support the community health centers that make Rhode Island a healthier place to live."

"I'm proud to join the Rhode Island Health Center Association in celebrating National Health Center Week 2017. Community health centers provide high-quality health care to tens of millions of Americans, including millions who were finally able to get covered through the Affordable Care Act. This is particularly true in Rhode Island, where community health centers have expanded rapidly to meet the needs of our community," said Congressman David Cicilline. "It's critical that we support their work and continue to expand access to quality, affordable health care for all Americans."

Evidence shows patients choose health centers because they are convenient, affordable, and offer a range of integrated services from a team of caring professionals. All of the Rhode Island community health centers were early adopters of electronic health records, and all are recognized as advanced patient-centered medical homes.

One of the bright spots in America's healthcare system, community health centers serve more than 25 million Americans, a number that continues to grow along with the demand for affordable primary care. They truly are key to having healthier communities, with their significant record of successes including:

- Producing \$24 billion in annual health system savings
- Reducing unnecessary hospitalizations and unnecessary visits to the emergency room
- Treating patients for a fraction of the average cost of one emergency room visit
- Maintaining patient satisfaction levels of nearly 100 percent
- Serving more than one in six Medicaid beneficiaries for less than two percent of the national Medicaid budget.

Health centers not only prevent illness and foster wellness in the most challenging populations, they produce innovative solutions to the most pressing health care issues in their communities. They reach beyond the walls of conventional medicine to address the factors that may cause sickness, such as lack of nutrition, mental illness, homelessness and opioid addiction. Because of their long record of success in innovation, managing health care costs, and reducing chronic disease, health centers have a proud tradition of bipartisan support in Congress.

### **About the Rhode Island Health Center Association**

Rhode Island's nine community health centers, including eight federally qualified health centers and one island-based health center, served over 164,000 Rhode Islanders in 2016 at 36 service delivery locations throughout the state. In addition, the Providence Center, a community mental health organization, is an associate member of RIHCA. Rhode Island has no county government, no municipal health departments, and no public hospitals; its federally qualified health centers serve as the public primary care delivery system in the state. The community health centers have a long history of providing high-quality, low-cost primary health care to Rhode Islanders. The community health centers are non-profit, safety-net primary care providers that serve patient populations who otherwise

confront financial, geographic, language and cultural barriers accessing health care services. They provide care for Rhode Islanders who are uninsured, underinsured, privately insured and publicly insured.