



Rhode Island Community Health Centers Laud Historic Vote for Health Reform: Expanded Access to Health Care is Great News for Rhode Islanders

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[Providence, Rhode Island] – Last night, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to increase access to health care for all Americans. The health reform package advanced by the House will extend affordable health care coverage to 32 million Americans. It emphasizes cost-effective primary health care and preventive care, begins to address payment reform, bends the cost curve and reduces the deficit. The improvements and investments in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act set the foundation for an American health care system that works for all.

Community health centers particularly appreciate the provisions in this bill that will positively impact every health center and thousands of underserved communities nationwide. Congress and the President have made health centers an integral partner in improving the nation's health care delivery system. The health reform package passed by the House will preserve, strengthen and dramatically expand the Health Centers Program, and positively impact the care health centers provide to their patients every single day.

Rhode Island Health Center Association President and CEO Jane A. Hayward issued the following statement upon the occasion of the historic vote for health reform legislation:

“This is an historic, once-in-a-generation vote on a program that can positively change the lives of Americans. Rhode Island’s community health centers are

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ready to continue our work, and to increase our infrastructure to serve more patients. The bill passed last night will increase access to health insurance for many of Rhode Island's 140,000 uninsured. It was also increase access for everyone, with and without insurance, to the high-quality low-cost primary health care already provided to over 11% of Rhode Islanders at the community health centers.

“We extend our thanks to Congressmen Kennedy and Langevin for their votes last night in favor of health reform, and for their continued work on health reform and access to health care. Health reform is exciting news, and really only the beginning. Rhode Island's community health centers will come together to plan the best way to expand our services to be as effective as possible during the ramp-up to full implementation of health reform.

The health reform legislation passed by the House last night, together with the Reconciliation Act expected to pass the Senate shortly, provide increased resources for community health centers to expand their high-quality low-cost primary care services for more Rhode Islanders. In addition, the legislation calls for increased funding for the National Health Service Corps for scholarship and loan repayment for health care providers who serve patients in health centers and other settings.

Rhode Island's ten community health centers are a critical element in the state's health care landscape. Serving over 112,000 Rhode Islanders annually, the community health centers provide comprehensive, high quality primary and preventive care to Rhode Islanders whether they have insurance or not. About 28% of community health center patients are uninsured, about 22% are privately insured, and the rest are publicly insured (RIte Care, Medicaid and Medicare).

Founded in 1972, the Rhode Island Health Center Association supports, sustains, and strengthens Rhode Island's community health centers so they can provide high-quality, comprehensive primary health care.

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