

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:** Megan Taylor |
| September 20, 2017 | 202-224-6244 |

**Heller, Bipartisan Group of Senators Push for Community Health Centers**

**Washington, D.C.** – U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) sent a letter with a bipartisan group of 69 other senators to call for immediate action to extend critical funding for community health centers before funding runs out at the end of this month. In a letter to the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Chairman and Ranking Member, the group expressed their strong support for community health centers, which provide access to cost-effective primary and preventive care for families across the country.

“Without extension of the CHCF, community health centers will lose seventy percent of their funding,” **wrote the Senators.** “This will result in an estimated 2,800 site closures, the loss of 50,000 jobs, and result in 9 million Americans losing their access to care…We are already hearing of the disruptive effects of the uncertainty created by the impending funding cliff on health center operations—this disruption will increase significantly without an extension of funding by September 30.”

Community health centers operate in both rural and urban areas, in every state in the nation, and are an important health care provider. Last year, health centers were the medical home for one in twelve Americans, one in ten children, one in six Americans living in rural areas, and more than 330,000 of our nation’s veterans.

In total, 70 U.S. Senators signed on to the letter, including U.S. Senators Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), Roy Blunt (R-MO) Robert Menendez (D-NJ), John Boozman (R-AR), Bernie Sanders (D-VT), Roger Wicker (R-MS), Tom Carper (D-DE), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Mike Crapo (R-ID), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Dean Heller (R-NV), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND), Thad Cochran (R-MS), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Cory Gardner (R-CO), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Rob Portman (R-OH), Claire McCaskill (D-MO), Dan Sullivan (R-AK), Bill Nelson (D-FL), John Barrasso (D-WY), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Deb Fisher (R-NE), Jon Tester (D-MT), Steve Daines (R-MT), Joe Manchin (D-WV), Thom Tillis (R-NC), Joe Donnelly (D-IN), David Perdue (R-GA), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Susan Collins (R-ME), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Jim Risch (R-ID), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Chris Coons (D-DE), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Tom Udall (D-NM), Angus King (I-ME), Gary Peters (D-MI), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Jack Reed (D-RI), Ed Markey (D-MA), Catherine Cortez-Masto (D-NV), Cory Booker (D-NJ), John Hoeven (R-ND), Jeff Merkley (D-WA), Mike Rounds (R-SD), Tim Kaine (D-VA), John Kennedy (R-LA), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Jim Inhofe (R-OK), Bob Casey (D-PA), James Lankford (R-OK), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Mike Enzi (R-WY), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Al Franken (D-MN), Mark Warner (D-VA), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK).

**The letter reads in full:**

Senator Lamar Alexander

Chairman

Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

United States Senate

Washington, DC 20510

Senator Patty Murray

Ranking Member

Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

United States Senate

Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray,

We write today to share our strong support for community health centers and to urge swift resolution to the funding cliff community health centers face at the end of the month. Community health centers serve a critical role in communities throughout the United States and are important safety net providers. If Congress allows the Community Health Centers Fund (CHCF) to lapse, it would immediately threaten patient access to the cost-effective primary and preventive care health centers provide. We respectfully request you take immediate action to address CHCF funding.

Community health centers have long enjoyed strong bipartisan support. Since their initial creation over fifty years ago, community health centers have been a critical component of the nation’s primary care network, today serving approximately 26 million patients at over 10,000 sites throughout the United States. Community health centers operate in both rural and urban areas, in every state in the nation, and are an important part of the health care ecosystem of their communities. Last year, health centers were the medical home for one in twelve Americans, one in ten children, one in six Americans living in rural areas, and more than 330,000 of our nation’s veterans.

Congress’ previous investments in the community health center program have yielded real results and vastly improved the health and well-being of countless communities throughout the United States. Without extension of the CHCF, community health centers will lose seventy percent of their funding. This will result in an estimated 2,800 site closures, the loss of 50,000 jobs, and result in 9 million Americans losing their access to care. Along with the health center impact, the National Health Service Corps and the Teaching Health Centers Graduate Medical Education programs are at risk of expiry. As small businesses, health centers need predictability to secure financing for capital projects, to sign contracts, to recruit and retain providers and staff, and to sustain operations. We are already hearing of the disruptive effects of the uncertainty created by the impending funding cliff on health center operations—this disruption will increase significantly without an extension of funding by September 30.

We believe the strong bipartisan support the community health center program receives every year is a strong indicator of the importance of the program to the nation. We stand ready to work with you to ensure that the CHCF continues to be a vibrant program that has improved the health and well-being of many of our nation’s most vulnerable individuals and communities.

Thank you for your consideration of our thoughts. We stand ready to work with you to fund the community health center program to ensure no losses in health care access for the millions of Americans served by community health centers.