

News Release

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Community Health Center Patients and Staff Urge New York Legislators To Invest in Community Safety Net Providers

The **Community Health Care Association of New York State (CHCANYS)**, on behalf of federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), continues to urge legislators to align State spending with New York’s healthcare transformation agenda by allocating much needed capital dollars to community-based safety net providers and restoring proposed funding cuts to indigent care, safety-net pharmacy programs, and school based health programs. Taken together, these cuts would severely impact health centers’ financial viability and their ability to continue to serve New York’s most vulnerable populations.

On Monday, March 2, more than 600 health center patients and staff traveled to Albany to spread the message that New York must invest in community health centers that provide comprehensive primary care services in medically underserved areas to anyone seeking care, regardless of insurance status or ability to pay.

Assemblyman Richard Gottfried, Chair of the Health Committee congratulated the overflow crowd for setting a new Advocacy Day attendance record, noting “I have been a fan of our health centers for a long time.”

A number of policymakers also addressed the group, including Courtney Burke, NYS Deputy Secretary for Health, Jason Helgeson, NYS Medicaid Director, and Dan Sheppard, Deputy Commissioner of the Office of Primary Care and Health Systems Management. Each reinforced the importance of FQHCs as a safety net.

“We are a family — one that believes health care is a right, not a privilege,” Larry McReynolds, chair of the CHCANYS Board of Directors, told the assembled group. “You are putting a face to the words ‘community health center,’ and it’s that personal connection with our elected officials that makes the difference.” He followed up his remarks by leading the crowd in a rousing rendition of “Happy Birthday” to the community health center movement, which celebrates 50 years in 2015.

Neil Calman, MD, president and CEO of the Institute for Family Health, commented, “This is such a critical time for primary care. Achieving the goals of health care reform depends squarely on our ability to engage patients in quality preventive and primary care, and to train new primary care providers. Every effort must be made to retain funding that is threatened — or we will not be able to sustain the care that we provide to vulnerable populations, let alone engage in the innovations that practice transformation requires.”

About Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs)

Federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) are not-for-profit, community-based providers that provide high quality, cost-effective, patient-centered primary and preventive health services to anyone seeking care, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay. FQHCs are medical homes, offering a comprehensive model of care that is associated with demonstrated improved outcomes and reduced costs. Serving 1.7 million New Yorkers statewide, New York State's 63 FQHCs form an extensive primary care network of over 600 sites that is central to the health care safety net.

About the Community Health Care Association of New York State (CHCANYS)

CHCANYS' mission is to ensure that all New Yorkers, including those who live in medically underserved communities, have continuous access to high quality community-based health care services, including a primary care home. CHCANYS serves as the voice of community health centers as leading providers of primary health care in New York State. For more information visit www.chcanys.org.