Word count: 440

Even as more Americans have health insurance coverage these days, a serious healthcare problem persists nationwide: a shortage of places to go to get the primary and preventive care services that everyone needs. A key part of the solution lies in our nation’s Community Health Centers, which have provided quality, affordable care for the past five decades, and are increasingly becoming the go-to medical home for growing numbers of working Americans.

What began as a modest demonstration program in the mid-1960s has evolved 50 years later into the largest and most successful primary care system in the country. Since their inception, health centers have demonstrated impressive results in reducing infant mortality, improving immunizations rates, developing programs for early screening and treatment of cancer, and managing chronic conditions such as obesity and diabetes. Today, New York’s community, migrant, homeless, and public housing health centers serve 1.7 million patients at over 600 sites across the state.

Why does the demand for health center services continue to grow? One reason is that they are good at what they do. The care health centers provide is as good or even better that what one finds in a private physician practice. Health center patients report satisfaction levels of nearly 100 percent. Also, health center services are conveniently offered under one roof and may include dental, pharmacy, mental health and substance abuse counseling, vision, pediatric, geriatric, OB-GYN, and much more. Health centers go beyond simple healthcare delivery to solve problems that can affect community health, such as nutrition, joblessness, and mental health. [OPTIONAL: ADD A DESCRIPTION ABOUT WHAT YOUR CENTER DOES TO ADDRESS THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH]. Nationwide, health centers like ours save the U.S. healthcare system more than $24 billion every year in reduced overall costs from preventable hospitalizations and avoidable emergency room visits—a figure that dwarfs the federal investments made in their operations. Sustained public investment is critical. Without it, millions of patients could lose access to care and trigger a backlash of increased healthcare costs at a time when 62 million people across the country are already struggling with little or no access to affordable healthcare.

Health centers averted a massive cut to their funding earlier this year thanks to action by Members of Congress [NAME OF YOUR LOCAL MEMBERS OF CONGRESS]. Without their leadership, hundreds of families in our community would have lost access to affordable healthcare at [NAME OF HEALTH CENTER]. Today, we are grateful for their support and are using National Health Center Week 2015 (August 9-15) to thank them for their vote. Because of their efforts, health centers can continue to serve people and communities in need.