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Community Health Care Advocates Ask Federal Government to Continue Investment in High Quality Primary Care for New Yorkers

Dozens of community-based health care providers from across the state visited New York State's members of Congress today to urge them to continue fighting for Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) and expand access to high quality primary and preventative health care.

The New York providers are all members of the Community Health Care Association of New York State (CHCANYS). They are seeking continuation of \$1.5 billion in federal discretionary funding in FY 2017 and asking that an additional annual federal allocation known as the Health Center Fund be made permanent rather than subject to annual renewals. Providers are also seeking additional federal resources to train, recruit and retain a quality workforce.

"We are New York's primary care safety net, working on the front lines every day to increase and improve primary and preventative health care for New York's most vulnerable populations – uninsured, underinsured, poor, homeless, and many others in need of primary health care services," said **Elizabeth H. Swain, President and CEO of CHCANYS.**

"Our services are what help keep people out of emergency rooms and more expensive health care options. We're here today to ask the Federal government for their continued support, which will enable us to maintain current programs as well as expand our reach to areas of New York State that currently do not have adequate primary care capacity," Swain said.

CHCANYS represents the state's network of community-based comprehensive health care facilities, which provide comprehensive medical care regardless of a patient's insurance status or ability to pay.

Known as FQHCs, these 65 facilities across New York State serve 1.8 million patients at more than 600 sites. FQHCs provide the full range of medical care, including OB-GYN, eye and dental care, behavioral health, and more. FQHCs must serve an underserved area or population.

More than 150 New Yorkers participated in today's Washington, DC advocacy day and visited Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, as well as all 27 members of New York's delegation in the House of Representatives.

Senator Schumer said: “Community Health Centers are at the core of our public health system. The excellent care they provide for all communities and people, regardless of ability to pay or income status, can be a life-saving or changing event. I am excited to meet with my local community health centers from New York this week and hear about all of the good work they are doing and how I can continue to support and help them carry on their critical work.”

On the workforce issues, CHCANYS is specifically seeking full funding for the National Health Service Corps at \$380 million, as proposed by the President; necessary funding to preserve current Teaching Health Center programs; passing the Family Health Care Accessibility Act, allowing volunteer providers to be covered under health centers’ medical liability coverage; and passing the CONNECT for Health Act, which will improve FQHCs’ access to telehealth technology.

“FQHCs have enjoyed overwhelming bipartisan support from Congress for over 50 years, which has been essential to our ability to care for New York’s most vulnerable residents,” said **Mary Zelazny, Chair of the CHCANYS Board of Directors and CEO of Finger Lakes Community Health**. “We are here today to say thank you, but also to ask for continued support as we work to both secure and strengthen access to high-quality, comprehensive health care in the communities where it is most needed.”

For more information about CHCANYS, visit www.chcanys.org.

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About Federally Qualified Health Centers:

Federally qualified health centers (FQHC) 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 1.8 million New Yorkers at over 600 sites statewide, New York State’s 65 FQHCs form an extensive primary care network 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.