

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 20, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-220, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer:

We write in the midst of this global public health pandemic, as the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (“COVID-19”) is rapidly spreading through communities across America, to ask you to take urgent action, without delay, in reauthorizing critically needed funding for our nation’s community health centers (CHCs). Community Health Centers are at the frontlines of this crisis, providing medical care and testing for over 29 million low-income people. It is of utmost importance that CHCs receive the long-term and robust resources necessary to meet the needs of our nation’s most vulnerable communities, especially as they work to test and care for patients during this unprecedented public health crisis.

We have been encouraged by the House adoption of \$10 billion in program and capital improvement funds for CHCs as part of H.R. 3, the Elijah Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act as well as recently appropriated funding for CHC’s included in the emergency supplemental package that was passed and signed into law on March 6th. However, given the severity of the COVID-19 outbreak, we cannot afford to wait until May to reauthorize CHC funding. CHCs, facing increasingly dire financial and operating margins, have recently called for \$3.2 billion in emergency aid to keep their doors open and weather this crisis. We must ensure that CHCs can adequately operate with peace of mind about their financial stability in the days and weeks to come. It is for that reason that we respectfully request that, in addition to further emergency funds, any reauthorization include the highest levels of funding, consistent with or surpassing those outlined in H.R. 1943/S.962, the Community Health Center and Primary Care Workforce

Expansion Act, which is cosponsored by over 100 House Democrats.¹ We also urge you to ensure that these funds are distributed to CHCs as soon as possible.

Last October, 88 lawmakers sent a letter requesting long-term and robust funding levels for our nation's CHCs, as well as support for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) and the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) programs.² It is our hope that you will work with us to secure the long-term vitality of these programs.

As you know, CHCs provide essential preventive and primary medical, vision, dental, and mental health care and low-cost prescription drugs to millions of patients on a sliding-fee scale in every state and territory in America—many of whom would not receive health care otherwise. CHCs disproportionately serve communities of color, with African Americans making up more than one in five CHC patients. Additionally, CHCs serve as hubs of economic activity in thousands of communities across the country, saving our health care system more than \$24 billion per year and providing hundreds of thousands of good jobs.

Despite the vital role CHCs have played in tackling the biggest public health challenges of our time, CHCs have remained chronically underfunded. Proposals that would freeze funding for these programs pose a substantial risk to the millions of patients that depend on CHCs for their health care, particularly during a public health outbreak as severe as COVID-19, and could leave more than 3 million people without access to quality and affordable providers and 44,000 clinicians and staff without jobs. It is crucial that any deal to reauthorize CHCs, at a minimum, include annual funding increases as outlined in H.R. 1943/S. 962 in order to expand services, rather than cut them.

Furthermore, increased funding over five years consistent with or surpassing H.R. 1943/S. 962 will not only allow health centers to keep up with a growing and increasingly aging population and skyrocketing medical costs, but also provide health centers with the stability they need to train and recruit providers. Increased funding will allow our nation's CHCs to provide continuous health services for all who need it.

It is for these reasons that we reiterate our urgent request that Congressional leaders reaffirm their commitment to these vital programs – as the House did through passing H.R. 3 – by incorporating a reauthorization that fully funds the Community Health Center Fund for five years with 10-percent annual increases in the third COVID-19 response package. We also reemphasize the importance of providing strong funding that supports and expands the NHSC and THCGME programs. Together, the CHC, NHSC, and THCGME programs are the foundation of primary and preventive health care across this country.

We look forward to working together to fulfill our longstanding and shared commitment to protecting and expanding health care for American families, ensuring the long-term stability

¹ Community Health Center and Primary Care Workforce Expansion Act of 2019, H.R. 1943/S.962.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/1943?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%22hr+1943%22%7D&s=1&r=1v>

² United States Congress, Lawmakers Seek Strong, Long-Term Funding for Community Health Programs, <https://pressley.house.gov/sites/pressley.house.gov/files/20191023%20Bicameral%20Letter%20CHCs%20NHSC%20THCGME%20%28003%29.pdf>

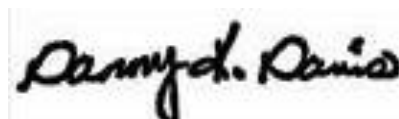
needed for CHCs to deal with this crisis, and mitigating any harm caused by this global health pandemic.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



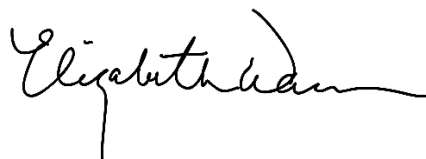
Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Signers

Senators

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Edward J. Markey
Richard J. Durbin
Christopher A. Coons
Richard Blumenthal
Tammy Duckworth
Amy Klobuchar
Tina Smith
Kamala D. Harris
Cory A. Booker
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Jimmy Gomez
Vicente Gonzalez
Al Green
Raúl M. Grijalva
Deb Haaland
Josh Harder
Alcee L. Hastings
Jahana Hayes
Brian Higgins
Jim Himes
Kendra S. Horn
Steven Horsford
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Pramila Jayapal
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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
John Joyce
Marcy Kaptur
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Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Ro Khanna
Ron Kind
Ann McLane Kuster
Conor Lamb
James R. Langevin
Rick Larsen
John B. Larson
John B. Larson
Brenda L. Lawrence
Barbara Lee
Susie Lee
Andy Levin
Mike Levin
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Zoe Lofgren
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Gregory W. Meeks
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Gwen Moore
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Richard E. Neal
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Chris Pappas
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Ed Perlmutter
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