

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 16, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steve Scalise
Majority Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan, Majority Leader McCarthy, Majority Whip Scalise, Minority Leader Pelosi, Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the nearly 280 bipartisan members of the House of Representatives who expressed support for robust health center funding in the FY19 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) Appropriations bill earlier this year, we support funding for the Health Center Program at the levels outlined in the Bipartisan Budget Act as you move forward with the final FY19 LHHS package.

Congress has continually supported and recognized health centers as a solution to the primary care access problems facing this country. And thanks to longstanding bipartisan support in Congress, health centers are the health care home for over 27 million patients, including 8 million children and over 330,000 veterans. Health centers employ nearly 208,000 people and generate billions of dollars in economic impact for communities in need of investment, while providing overall cost-savings to the health care system. Congress' investments in the Health Center Program have bolstered health centers' behavioral health workforce, broken down barriers to primary and preventive health care around the country, and expanded service capacity to meet the challenges on the front lines of the opioid epidemic.

Earlier this year, Congress joined together in bipartisan fashion to end the health center funding cliff that threatened to cut 70 percent of federal grant funding for America's 1,400 health center organizations. However, health centers in more than 10,400 urban and rural communities nationwide remain in a continued state of uncertainty due to the possibility that the majority of their federal funding could be slashed again on September 30, 2019 if Congress does not act. Under these circumstances, it is critical that discretionary funding for the Health Center Program remain whole at the level outlined in the Bipartisan Budget Act in the final FY19 LHHS Appropriations bill to provide certainty and stability for health centers. Any decrease in funding would make it difficult for health centers to maintain overall operations, recruit health care providers and provide the full spectrum of comprehensive primary care services – potentially resulting in lapses in patient care and higher health care costs for millions of Americans.

It is imperative that funding in the final FY19 LHHS Appropriations bill remain whole in order to remove this uncertainty and to allow health centers to plan for new and expanded services to meet the changing needs of their communities and the growing demand for affordable health care across the country.

Thank you for consideration of this request, and for your continued support of the vital role health centers play in preserving and expanding access to care in the communities they serve.

Sincerely,



Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress



Gene Green
Member of Congress