

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 10, 2023

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chairwoman, Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education and Related
Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education and Related
Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Baldwin and Ranking Member Capito:

We thank the Subcommittee for your continued support and recognition of America's Community Health Centers as a longstanding bipartisan solution to the primary care access problems facing this country. As you proceed with the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Appropriations process, we respectfully request that the Subcommittee **provide robust funding for Community Health Centers** within the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies legislation for FY24. This will ensure health centers remain providers of high quality, cost-effective primary care and continue to provide innovative, high-value health services to medically-underserved communities across the nation.

Since the first health centers opened their doors more than fifty years ago, they have proven to be a worthwhile investment, providing quality and affordable primary and preventive care, dental, behavioral health, substance use disorder, pharmacy, vision, and a variety of complementary services to America's most vulnerable patients and medically-underserved communities. Today, thanks to longstanding bipartisan support in Congress, well over 1,400 health center organizations serve more than 14,000 communities in every state and U.S. territory, including 42% of health centers in rural areas. Health centers are the medical home for over 30 million patients – or one in every eleven Americans – including 9 million children and nearly 400,000 veterans. Furthermore, health centers employ over half a million people – generating \$84.7 billion in economic impact in 2021 for local communities and providing cost savings for the nation's health care system.

Community Health Centers have a proven record of using cost-effective, innovative strategies that deliver high-quality, affordable health care. And for the past decade, Congress has supported health centers on a bipartisan basis through the annual appropriations process for the Health Center program, combined with investments in the mandatory Community Health Center Fund. With the Community Health Center Fund also set to expire on September 30, 2023, we urge you to work with your colleagues on other committees of jurisdiction to keep funding for Community Health Centers whole in FY24. This combined discretionary and base funding of the Health Center Program is critical to the success of these safety-net providers nationwide as they meet the growing demand for affordable health care and respond to the changing needs of their communities.

Central to the health center mission is an emphasis on treating the entire person through integrated care. The objective is to serve as a comprehensive medical home by addressing physical health conditions and

an individual's mental health, dental needs, and social determinants of health. As they provide behavioral health services, offer HIV/AIDS prevention care, address rising maternal mortality rates, or deliver opioid addiction treatment, health centers are a cornerstone of the nation's health care system and need reliable, sustained federal support to continue their work. Without access to primary care, many people, including the chronically ill, delay seeking health care until they are seriously ill. This leads to higher costs and worse health outcomes. The Health Center model is designed to address this and other health challenges by fostering innovation and high-value care at the community level.

Health centers also demonstrated their value to the nation throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Reflecting the needs of their communities, health centers educated, vaccinated, and treated millions of patients. Since January 2021, health centers have administered over 22 million COVID-19 vaccines and 20 million tests. These providers are trusted voices in the community and deliver health care to hard-to-reach populations.

While health centers are willing and able to ramp up even more to care for the people in our communities and the nation, they desperately need resources to keep delivering care. For many health centers, funding will be critical to provide post-COVID-19 follow-up care and to address health center provider shortages. Severe workforce shortages, which existed before the pandemic, and growing salary gaps make it difficult for health centers to recruit and retain the workforce necessary to provide high-quality care. Burn-out, early retirement, sickness, and marketplace competition due to COVID-19 has only exacerbated this crisis.

As Congress works to improve access to care, reduce health care spending, and promote patient-centered solutions to our health care challenges, we urge the Subcommittee to continue robust support for Community Health Centers – and their demonstrated record of success. Thank you for your continued support.

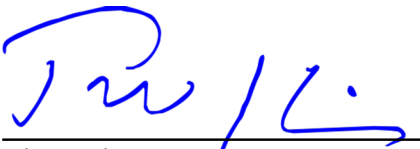
Sincerely,



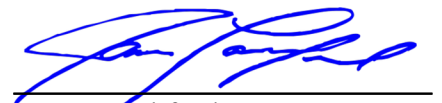
Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Roger F. Wicker
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Tim Kaine
United States Senator



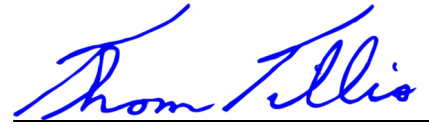
James Lankford
United States Senator

United States Senate

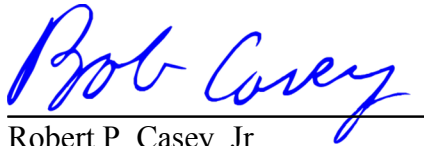
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Gary C. Peters
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United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
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United States Senator



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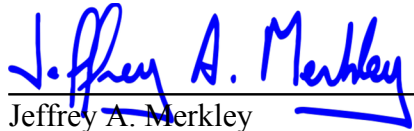
Dan Sullivan
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



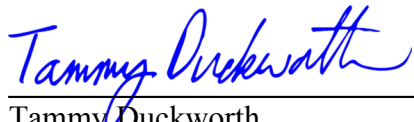
Markwayne Mullin
United States Senator



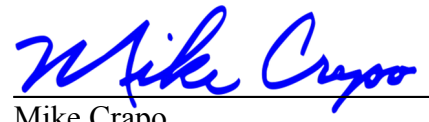
Jeffrey A. Merkley
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Kevin Cramer
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Tammy Duckworth
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Mike Crapo
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John Hickenlooper
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Steve Daines
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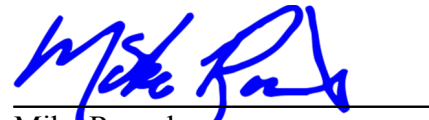
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



James E. Risch
United States Senator



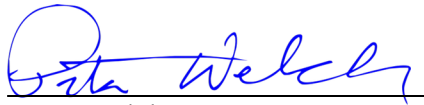
Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



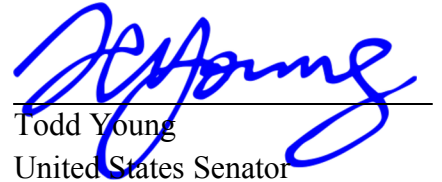
Mike Rounds
United States Senator

United States Senate

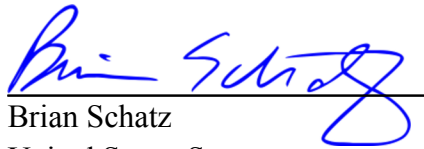
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Peter Welch
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Todd Young
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Brian Schatz
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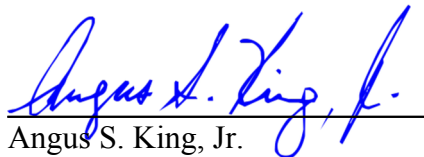
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



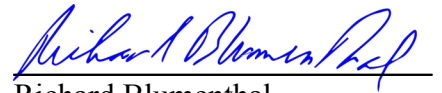
Richard J. Durbin
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Thomas R. Carper
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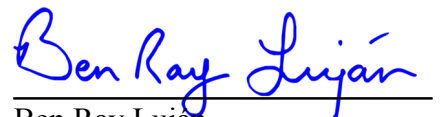
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



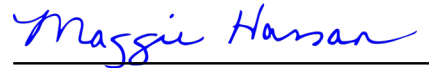
Kirsten Gillibrand
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Ben Ray Lujan
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Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



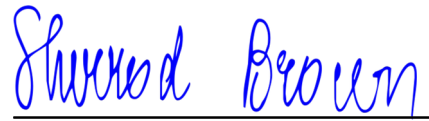
Jon Ossoff
United States Senator



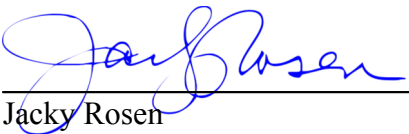
Jack Reed
United States Senator



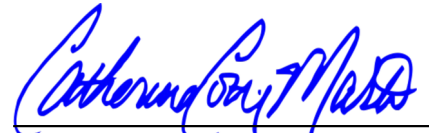
Alex Padilla
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Sherrod Brown
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Jacky Rosen
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Catherine Cortez Masto
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Mazie K. Hirono
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Cory A. Booker
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John Fetterman
United States Senator



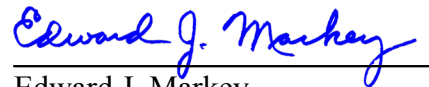
Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



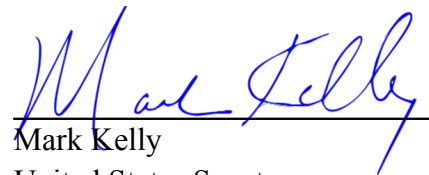
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator



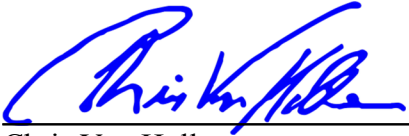
Mark Kelly
United States Senator



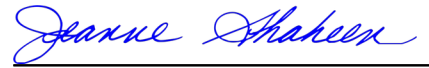
Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
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Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator