

Media Advisory

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In Record-Setting Lobby Day, Providers Tell Albany: Community Health Care for Uninsured at Serious Risk

ALBANY – On the largest advocacy day in its history, the Community Health Care Association of NYS (CHCANYS) and 900 community health care supporters told Albany lawmakers and the Cuomo administration that New York’s health care safety net is at risk.

“If the state is going to meet its health care transformation goals, our community health providers need funding to help cover the cost of caring for uninsured patients and meaningful capital investment,” said **Harvey Lawrence, President and CEO of Brownsville Multi-Service Family Health Center in Brooklyn and a CHCANYS board member.**

CHCANYS represents the state’s network of non-profit, community-based comprehensive health care facilities, known as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). They provide comprehensive health care regardless of a patient’s insurance status or ability to pay.

Working out of 650 sites statewide, FQHCs serve two million New Yorkers annually – an increase of 35 percent since 2008. Some 86 percent of patients are near or below the poverty line.

CHCANYS top priority this year is a request for the state to increase funding for indigent care by \$20 million – an increase will maintain 2016 funding levels and avoid undue financial harm to FQHCs and other safety net providers that serve high numbers of uninsured New Yorkers. Without these additional dollars, many FQHCs may be forced to reduce staff, eliminate expansion plans and/or limit access precisely at a time when it is anticipated the numbers of uninsured may increase statewide, unnecessarily increasing reliance on more costly forms of care.

Lisa Perry, Interim President and CEO of CHCANYS, said: “Our health centers provide comprehensive, culturally sensitive primary health care to everyone who walks in the door, regardless of insurance status or ability to pay. They treat patients in the community, helping to keep them out of the emergency room. Any reduction in indigent care funding could reduce access to care and lead to an increase in patients’ reliance on more costly forms of care, such as the emergency room, precisely at a time when many people are at risk of losing coverage due to potential federal actions.”

Mary Zelazny, Chair of the CHCANYS Board Chair and CEO of Finger Lakes Community Health, said: “The State talks about how critical New York’s FQHCs are to advancing reform efforts and keeping patients out of the emergency room, yet they have not invested sufficiently in us. Not only are we facing a potential reduction in our indigent

care funding, but we simply aren't being given proportional access to the resources we need to participate meaningfully in transformation efforts.”

CHCANYS noted that while New York is relying on the work of the safety net healthcare providers that serve high-poverty communities to transform its healthcare delivery system and keep patients out of the emergency room, it has sent those providers only 6 percent of the \$2.8 billion spent on this purpose in the last three years. The overwhelming lion's share of the funds has gone to hospital networks, which have received even more state dollars when other hospital-only funding is factored in.

Lindsay C. Farrell, President and CEO, Open Door Family Medical Centers in Westchester and CHCANYS Board member, said: “We support New York's efforts to transform the healthcare delivery system and are pleased the state recognizes the importance of expanding access to comprehensive, community-based care. But meaningful, sustainable delivery system transformation will be achieved only if the state lives up to its own policy. New York needs to better fund the community healthcare providers whose work is at the center of the reimagined care delivery system.”

For more information about Community Health Center Grassroots Advocacy Day, [click here](#).

For more information about CHCANYS, see 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 2 million New Yorkers at 650 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.