



For Immediate Release

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

# **INVEST IN COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS!**

*Community Health Centers from Across Central New York Stand United at Syracuse Community Health to Send Message to Governor Hochul and Lawmakers as Budget Negotiations Stretch Past April 1 Deadline*

*Community Health Centers Continue to Host Regional Events Across NYS Urging \$300 Million Investment as Financial Crisis Looms*

(Syracuse) – Leadership, staff, and patients from Community Health Centers across Central New York are standing with [Community Health Care Association of New York State](#) (CHCANYS) members from across New York State to send a message to Governor Hochul and State legislators as they work past the deadline to finalize the state budget: *Invest in Community Health Centers!* Today's event, held at [Syracuse Community Health](#), was part of a series of regional advocacy events that have been taking place across New York State since January. Additional events have been hosted in Western New York, Long Island, the Rochester area, the Capital Region, the Bronx, and Westchester County and included health centers from across each region.

Community health centers (CHCs) are in crisis, and things are only going to get worse. Changes at the federal level mean 1.5 million New Yorkers currently stand to lose their health insurance. Those patients are likely to end up at CHCs. Without Medicaid coverage or other insurance, CHCs won't get paid for treating this influx of patients, costing them an estimated \$300 million in revenue. While the Governor, Assembly, and Senate have proposed \$60M, \$80M, and \$100M, respectively, these proposed investments still fall far short of meeting health centers' needs. We are asking New York State's leadership to align their investment with the funding abyss CHCs are facing.

Community health centers serve patients at almost 900 sites statewide, providing primary and preventive care including medical, dental, behavioral health, vision, and substance use disorder services to more than 2.5 million people each year; that's 1 in 8 New Yorkers. CHCs are located in communities that might not otherwise have a primary doctor's office, or access to one, and serve everyone who walks through their door, even if they don't have insurance or the ability to pay.

Nicholas H. Apostoleris, PhD, MBA, [Mosaic Health](#) President & CEO said, "Primary care is tough. It doesn't bring in a lot of money. It is hard on the clinicians and staff. But access to high

quality primary care is the key to community health and well-being. We in the community health center movement believe in it because: 1. We see everyone in the community without regard to their ability to pay; 2. We attract committed clinicians in medicine, dentistry, and behavioral health who really care about the communities they serve; and 3. Our governance is for the patients because it is by the patients - a majority of our governing boards have to be patients. Community health centers are struggling. We are the 'little guys' in all these health care fights between hospitals and Big Pharma. Hopefully those in power will look out for these overlooked 'little guys.'"

Joey Marie Horton, MBA, [North Country Family Health Center](#) CEO said, "As both a CEO and a patient, I know how essential Community Health Centers are, especially in rural communities like the North Country, where access to care can be limited. My family relies on our health center not because we have to, but because we choose to, for high-quality care close to home. But without adequate funding, that care is at risk for thousands of people across our region who depend on us. Protecting health centers means protecting access to care for everyone. That's why New York must invest \$300 million in Community Health Centers."

Tricia Peter Clark, MBA, FACMPE, FACHE, [ConnexCare](#) President & CEO said, "Community Health Centers are a cornerstone of New York's healthcare system, serving one in eight New Yorkers and anchoring care in communities that would otherwise go without. But right now, we are being asked to do more with less: less funding, fewer staff, and growing patient need. The proposals currently on the table simply don't meet the scale of the challenge. A \$300 million investment is the bare minimum level of support required to sustain the safety net and protect access to care statewide."

Kim Osborne, BSN, MBA, [Family Health Network of CNY Inc.](#), President & CEO said, "Through the 340B program, Community Health Centers can stretch limited resources and reinvest savings into vital services that strengthen care for underserved communities. The 340B Prescription Drug Anti-Discrimination Act is a no-cost, commonsense fix that protects the savings health centers depend on to provide things like discounted medications, school-based health centers and other programs one in every eight New Yorkers relies on."

Ofrona Reid, MD, MBA, MS, President & CEO, [Syracuse Community Health](#) said, "As an internal medicine physician seeing patients twice a week and President and CEO at Syracuse Community Health, I can tell you that our patients are more complex than ever, and the care they need takes more time and resources than our system recognizes. The cost far exceeds reimbursement, and access to care is at risk. If this continues and additional cuts to those who need access to healthcare, we risk weakening the very healthcare safety net our community depends on for primary care, behavioral health, and specialty services community health centers provide."

"As budget negotiations continue into the month of April, we are urging Albany to remember CHCs and increase funding for community health centers to \$300 million. Anything short of that leaves CHCs vulnerable in this current environment," said Rose Duhan, CHCANYS President and CEO. "We hear lawmakers talk a lot about protecting the safety net. Well, here's your chance! Can we count on Albany to make a critical investment in community health centers to ensure the safety net survives?"

CHCs are [economic engines](#), but they have been dramatically [underfunded](#) for decades. Medicaid is their single largest source of income, representing 42% of total CHC revenue. Yet New York's outdated Medicaid reimbursement system, unique to CHCs, pays rates based on

costs from a quarter of a century ago, putting CHCs at a disadvantage as they deal with rising costs, workforce shortages, and growing demand.

New York's community health centers are joining forces as the budget is negotiated, holding events all over the state to share their message in a unified voice.

CHCANYS represents all community health centers in New York State. This year, CHCANYS is advocating for the following on behalf of New York's CHCs:

- **Invest \$300M in CHCs** to strengthen the state's health care safety net, keep doors open, and protect jobs. This is an opportunity for New York State to showcase its commitment to community health and health care access for every New Yorker while demonstrating fiscal responsibility.
- **Protect the 340B prescription drug program (A.6222 Paulin/S.1913 Rivera)**, which is a federal program that allows CHCs to reinvest millions of dollars in prescription drug cost savings into their communities at zero cost to taxpayers or the government.
- **Protect patients' access to telehealth** by ensuring CHCs receive full payment for telehealth services.
- **Allow medical assistants to vaccinate**, freeing up other caregivers to work at the top of their license while allowing community health centers to keep their communities healthy.

CHCANYS' [Legislative Agenda](#) briefing book provides additional information about CHCs, who they serve, how they contribute to their communities, and what support they need to survive and thrive. Our [State](#) and [NYC](#) fact sheets provide a breakdown of the types of care CHCs provide and how they are funded.

[Images from today's event are available here for use.](#)

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**About Community Health Care Association of New York State.** CHCANYS is the voice of nearly 80 community health centers, also known as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), serving patients at almost 900 sites across every region of New York State, providing care to more than 2.5 million people each year. Our members are on the front lines of community health care, providing primary and preventive care, including medical, dental, behavioral health, vision, and substance use disorder services to high need patients in medically underserved areas.