



Connecting Communities Who Care

TENNESSEE PRIMARY CARE ASSOCIATION

NEWS RELEASE

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Tennessee Congressional Delegation Supports Health Center Reauthorization

Key in reaching Health Care Home Tennessee goals

Nashville, TN — After several years of Community Health Center supporters advocating for reauthorization of the federal Health Centers Program, the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly voted on June 4 in favor of renewing this program that provides quality, comprehensive health care for over 17 million individuals nationwide and over 270,000 Tennessee residents.

The Tennessee Primary Care Association would like to thank the Tennessee Congressional delegation for their support of Health Centers by voting in favor of the Health Centers Renewal Act (HR 1343). In addition to reauthorizing the program through 2012, this bill will preserve the program's core elements, enabling uninsured and low-income individuals to access care at 1,150 Community Health Centers across the country, including over 150 sites in Tennessee. It will also grant liability protection for physicians who volunteer at Health Centers or travel to provide services in emergencies.

"While the Senate must still act on this legislation before Health Centers are reauthorized for another five years, the support of the House is a key step in strengthening and expanding the ability of Community Health Centers to be the health care home for so many medically underserved individuals, families, and communities that otherwise do not have access to health care," said Kathy Wood-Dobbins, Executive Director, Tennessee Primary Care Association. "Our Health Center community across the state appreciates the delegation's support in moving the Health Centers Renewal Act through the House."

A similar bill (S 901) is pending in the Senate. Once it is passed, Members of the House and Senate will have the opportunity to merge the two bills into one piece of legislation that is imperative as the Association begins a new campaign. "**Health Care Home Tennessee**" calls for continued investment and partnership in Tennessee's Health Centers to strengthen their infrastructure and provide the necessary tools for growth so that they can serve over 500,000 Tennesseans by the year 2015.

"Strengthening the primary care infrastructure in the state will lead to long-term systemic savings and a healthier state as a whole," said Wood-Dobbins. In order for the Health Centers to keep up with the rising demand for accessible and affordable health care in Tennessee, they will require sustainable state and federal funding, increases in the primary care workforce, capital funding for renovated or new facilities, a focus on quality care that improves health outcomes, and, of course, reauthorization to continue serving their patients.

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Tennessee Primary Care Association (TPCA) is a nonprofit corporation connecting Tennesseans with a health care home, especially the medically underserved. Since its inception in 1976, TPCA committed to 1) identifying unmet needs and gaps in service access, 2) developing systems of care, 3) advocating for resources, and 4) promoting awareness of Community Health Centers. Membership includes 34 nonprofit primary care clinics across the state operating over 150 sites providing comprehensive medical care.