



NEWS STATEMENT
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Statement attributable to:
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Budget Agreement Creates a Health Care Deficit

DENVER— The federal funding agreement jeopardizes the ability of the Community Health Center (CHC) program to reach more people who are living without health care. Communities currently desperately in need of a Community Health Center will have to wait – again.

We know that Congress and the President face many, many difficult choices. We know they worked hard and lost sleep to make this agreement. But in the sound and fury to cut dollars, they have created a deficit in the future of health and health care for working families and individuals.

On Friday, April 8, 2011, President Barack Obama, House of Representatives Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio), and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) came to an agreement on how to fund non-defense discretionary programs of the federal government for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2011, which ends Sept. 30, 2011. This agreement, if passed by Congress, will reduce the federal budget by an estimated \$38.5 billion from the level of funding in FY2010.

In that agreement the CHC program was cut by \$600 million. With hundreds of thousands of Coloradans still lacking access to adequate health care or insurance coverage, this abrogates the promise made by Congress in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to make health care more accessible and affordable. Coloradans, once again, will be forced to rely on emergency room care, often when their health care conditions are far more advanced, harder to treat, and more costly. Instead of expanding the proven Community Health Center program to communities in need, ACA funding will have to be used for CHCs to continue caring for the people they already serve, with little if any available to address the needs of the millions of Americans who don't have the health care they need.

Dozens of Colorado communities stand ready to expand the CHC model. Fourteen communities filed applications with the US Department of Health and Human Services for New Access Point grants to build new health center sites in communities not currently served, and 13 CHCs have submitted applications for Expanded Services grants to bring new health care services to communities in need. If fully funded, these applications would have brought a total of \$15 million to Colorado, providing health care for the first time to more than 95,000 Coloradans and new health care services to more than 13,000 people who are already CHC patients. The grants would have helped create an estimated 393 more jobs in the health care field in Colorado.

Now, however, the ability of Community Health Centers to care for people who are currently living without health care is severely restricted. The federal message: "Keep waiting. No help for you this year."

We understand the need to control federal spending. By their very nature, Community Health Centers have always helped control spending by providing high-quality, affordable care to communities in need, and reducing the overall cost of health care by helping people stay healthy, employed, in school, and out of the emergency room. CHCs provide comprehensive primary care for less than \$2 a day.

Balancing the federal budget must always plan for the future. Cutting the budget by going back on the promise to make health care more affordable and accessible is not a good investment in the future. In fact, it will cost more: in individual lives, in the lives of communities, and in the health of our nation.

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To view the statement of the National Association of Community Health Centers, please go to <http://www.nachc.org/pressrelease-detail.cfm?PressReleaseID=670>.

The Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN) is the collective voice for Colorado's 15 Community Health Centers (CHCs) and their patients. CHCs provide a health care home to more than 500,000 of their community members - one in 10 people in Colorado - from 58 of the state's 64 counties. Without CHCs, hundreds of thousands of Colorado's low-income families and individuals would have no regular source of health care. CCHN's mission is to increase access to high quality health care for people in need in Colorado. For more information about CCHN, please visit www.cchn.org.

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