United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 23, 2015

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray,

We would like to thank the Subcommittee for your continued support and recognition of Health Centers as a long-standing bipartisan solution to the primary care access shortage facing our country. **During the Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 Appropriations process, we respectfully request that the Subcommittee continue to recognize Health Centers as providers of high quality, cost-effective primary care and that you work to ensure their continued sustainability and viability in the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies legislation.**

This year marks fifty years since the first Health Centers opened their doors. Since the inception of the program, Health Centers have worked to provide primary care and a variety of support and medical services, such as dental and behavioral care, to America's most vulnerable patients and communities. Today, nearly 1,300 health center organizations serve more than 9,000 urban and rural communities nationwide. Health Centers are the health-care home for more than 23 million patients, including nearly seven million children and more than 268,000 veterans. These centers employ more than 156,000 Americans, and generate an economic impact and overall cost savings of over $24 billion.

America's Health Centers have continually proven to be a worthwhile investment by meeting the nation's growing demands for quality and affordable health care. We are concerned about the scheduled expiration of the Health Center Fund at the end of this fiscal year, which would put Health Centers around the country at risk of a reduction or interruption of services, and we encourage you to work with us to ensure the fiscal sustainability of the health center program. Without access to primary care, many people, including the chronically ill, delay seeking health care until they are seriously ill and require inpatient hospitalization or care at an emergency room at a much higher cost to the entire health-care system.

As Congress works to improve access to care and reduce health-care expenditures, we urge the Subcommittee to support Health Centers, allowing them to continue to provide cost-effective primary care. Thank you for your continued support of the vital role Health Centers play in preserving and expanding access to care in the communities they serve.

Sincerely,

Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Richard Burr
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Johnny Isakson
United States Senator

Jon Tester
United States Senator

Mark S. Kirk
United States Senator

Joe Donnelly
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John Cornyn
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Sheldon Whitehouse
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Dan Sullivan
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Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

John Hoeven
United States Senator

Deb Fischer
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
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Mark Warner
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Jeff Merkley
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Amy Klobuchar
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Barbara Boxer
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Benjamin L. Cardin
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Joe Manchin III
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Maria Cantwell
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Gary Peters
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Brian Schatz
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Jack Reed
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Thomas R. Carper
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Mazie K. Hirono
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Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
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Tammy Baldwin
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Marco Rubio
United States Senator

Patrick J. Leahy
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Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Mike Crapo
United States Senator

Steven Daines
United States Senator

Michael Enzi
United States Senator