

NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Signs Legislation to Bring More Health Care Providers To Underserved Areas of Colorado

DENVER— Colorado Governor Bill Ritter today signed legislation to make it easier for health care professionals to work in medically underserved areas of the state. The legislation was proposed by Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN), the state association of Community Health Centers.

SB232, sponsored by Sen. Chris Romer (D-Denver) and Rep. Tom Massey (R-Pagosa Springs), creates a student loan repayment program for health care professionals in medically underserved areas of the state. This bill will enable up to six health care providers to be placed in medically underserved communities each year by providing student loan repayment assistance. This will help:

- Provide access to care for an estimated 6,000 patients per year.
- Introduce providers to needy communities. These providers often stay beyond their obligations and continue to serve underserved communities for many more years.

The program is funded with a combination of tobacco settlement funds; a contribution from ColleagueInvest, the Colorado Department of Higher Education's education financing division; and an expected federal match through the National Health Service Corps.

Community Health Centers provide primary health care to one in twelve Coloradans in high-need urban, rural and frontier parts of the state. Many physicians want to serve low-income, uninsured, or other underserved communities after finishing medical training, but are unable to do so, given their high debt load. The student loan repayment program will help the health centers hire and retain health care professionals in areas that don't have enough of them to meet the community needs.

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For additional information about the student loan repayment legislation, please contact Maureen Maxwell at (303) 861-5165, Ext. 259, cell (303) 913-9078, or maureen@cchn.org.

The Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN) celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2007. CCHN is Colorado's Primary Care Association, representing 15 non-profit Community Health Centers (CHCs) operating 118 sites across the state. CHCs provide comprehensive primary health care in community, migrant, homeless, and school-based health centers to one in twelve Coloradans. 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.