



NEWS STATEMENT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Statement attributable to:
Ross Brooks
Chief Operating Officer
Colorado Community Health Network

New State Law to Help with Health Care Workforce Shortage ***Governor Signs CO Health Service Corps Legislation***

DENVER— Today, Governor Bill Ritter signed into law the Colorado Health Service Corps, which will be a significant help to efforts to assure that there are enough health care providers across Colorado to meet health care needs. HB 1138 was sponsored by Sen. John P. Morse (D-Colorado Springs) and Rep. Sara Gagliardi (D-Arveda).

To increase access to health care for all Coloradans, our state must attract physicians and other health care providers to practice in rural and underserved areas of the state. Student loan repayment is a proven tool to recruit and retain providers. It helps health care providers pay off the high cost of medical education and focus on working where they are needed most, not on where they can afford to work.

Colorado's Community Health Centers, which are located in rural and underserved areas throughout the state, rely on loan repayment to attract providers. Health care providers who receive student loan repayment assistance often stay beyond their loan repayment obligations and continue to provide care at Community Health Centers for many more years. The State Health Care Professional Loan Repayment Program, operated by the Primary Care Office in the Department of Public Health and Environment, has granted loan repayment to health care professionals in some of Colorado's most underserved communities.

HB 10-1138 will further strengthen Colorado's loan repayment program. The new law will:

- Create a network of health care providers who are committed to the mission of providing care for people in both urban and rural areas who are uninsured or on public insurance.
- Modify the definition of "Primary Health Services" to encompass physical, mental and dental health care services, health care professions that also are in critical shortage in areas of the state.
- Rename the State Health Care Professional Loan Repayment Program as the "Colorado Health Service Corps (CHSC)." This is one step in adjusting the program to mirror the very successful federal program, the National Health Service Corps (NHSC), and position the state to handle additional NHSC funding that will become available under health care reform.
- Encourage foundations, private funders, and the business community to support this program to draw down additional federal matching funds.

Colorado's 15 CHCs rely on student loan repayment and the efforts of the State Primary Care Office to attract health professionals to Colorado and into CHCs.

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To interview Mr. Brooks, please contact Maureen Maxwell at (303) 861-5165, Ext. 259, cell (303)913-9078, or maureen@cchn.org.

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 55 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.

600 grant street • suite 800 • denver,co 80203 • 303-861-5165 • 303-861-5315 (fax) • www.cchn.org