



NEWS STATEMENT
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Statement attributable to:
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State Budget Cuts Will Reduce Access to Health Care ***Cuts Add to Burden on Low-Income Working Families***

DENVER— The budget cuts underway at the State Capitol will jeopardize health care access for 13,000 low-income individuals in Colorado. These cuts come at a time when many are losing their jobs and their health insurance.

Budget actions taken today will transfer some of the Amendment 35 tobacco tax revenue away from the programs for which Colorado voters approved it in 2004. The cuts approved by a conference committee for SB 271 include a transfer of up to \$7.4 million from the Primary Care Fund, which helps provide care to the uninsured.

We applaud the efforts of the Joint Budget Committee and others in the legislature who worked to minimize the size of the cut to the Primary Care Fund part of Amendment 35. We recognize and honor the efforts of legislators who face difficult choices when state revenues fall so drastically.

Like many in Colorado, Community Health Centers are working hard to meet the needs of the uninsured, and they will continue to do so. Unfortunately this task becomes more difficult with this reduction in revenue.

Thirty-six clinics around the state receive money from the Primary Care Fund. Fifteen of these are Community Health Centers.

This cut is the deepest cut to Colorado's Community Health Centers in the last decade.

The cut to the Primary Care Fund will reduce access to health care for uninsured Coloradans. Without a source for primary care, some people will put off seeking health care until their conditions are much worse – and then go to emergency rooms where care is more expensive.

Colorado's 15 Federally Qualified Health Centers collectively care for one-third of all low-income uninsured in Colorado, one-third of all Medicaid enrollees, and one-third of all Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+) enrollees. In the last year Health Centers have seen a huge increase in demand for services. In 2008 Colorado Community Health Centers provided comprehensive primary health care to 18,000 more patients than the 401,000 served the year before. The Primary Care Fund created by Amendment 35 helped Health Centers grow to meet this demand. Cutting the Fund will seriously impede the ability of Health Centers to meet the continued growing need for primary health care.

Unfortunately, these cuts will undermine the economic stimulus dollars coming to Colorado for health care. The dollars from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) are intended to create jobs and increase health care services during a time of high unemployment and increased numbers of people without health insurance. The cuts in the state budget will make it difficult for Community Health Centers to meet their obligations under ARRA, since it will be harder to hire new staff and expand services to new patients with a loss of state funds.

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To interview Ms. Anderson, 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 people from 54 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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