



## **NEWS STATEMENT**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 21, 2009

Statement attributable to:

Pete Leibig

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President of the Board of Directors, Colorado Community Health Network

And

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Colorado Community Health Network

### **Budget Cuts Are a Danger to Health of Coloradans**

DENVER— Budget cuts under consideration at the State Capitol will have grave consequences for Coloradans. These cuts come at a time when many are losing their jobs and their health insurance. The cuts will cause loss of access to health care.

The budget would cut Amendment 35, approved by Colorado voters in 2004, and would cut the Medicaid provider reimbursement rates by 4.3 percent.

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.

In addition, the Medicaid reimbursement cuts hitting other health care providers will make it impossible for some private providers to make ends meet, and they could be forced to turn away new Medicaid patients. Some of these patients will come to us for primary care, and we will help as many as we can. However, most Community Health Centers are already operating at full capacity and some have waiting lists. In addition, the Medicaid cuts will make it more difficult for Health Centers to find the specialty care their patients sometimes need.

Most frightening is that 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. The transfer of these costs to the rates charged to insured patients will continue. Worst of all will be the human cost: some will suffer much worse health consequences than if they had been able to seek care early before their health worsened, and some will not seek care at all.

These cuts will undermine the economic stimulus dollars coming to Colorado for health care. These 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 uninsurance. These cuts in the state budget will make it very difficult if not impossible for Community Health Centers to meet their obligations under ARRA.

There is much talk these days of economic recovery and how to achieve it. Cutting access to health care for Coloradans is not the recovery our state needs. We urge our legislators not to balance the state budget on those already most impacted by the difficult economic situation.

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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 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](http://www.cchn.org).

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