Community Health Centers Are Helping Colorado Address COVID-19
Current Crisis Requires Service Changes That Heavily Impact Financial Stability

Statement attributable to
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DENVER— Colorado Community Health Centers, the health care homes for more than one in seven people in Colorado, are responding to the current public health crisis with energy and commitment, rapidly adjusting services and practices to meet patient and community needs safely.

This rapid response includes:
• Reconfiguring clinic space to provide for in-person well and sick care
• Offering medical and behavioral health services via telephone and audio-visually
• Serving as community testing sites in many areas
• Continuing to care for people with and without health insurance
• Providing emergency dental care to keep otherwise healthy people out of the emergency room
• Working closely with public health and hospitals to plan for peak infection rates and to provide follow-up care after hospital discharge

As Coloradans follow the federal and state “stay at home” orders, and CHCs are delaying regular wellness and other non-essential appointments, CHCs are seeing fewer patients and generating less revenue. Although some visits can be moved to telehealth visits, necessary social distancing is reducing volume – and the revenue needed for CHCs to pay staff and keep the lights on.

Dental visits are down by more than 85% to comply with state orders, and medical visits are down between 25-50% at CHCs across the state.

Colorado CHCs are losing a combined $2 million to $3 million weekly as the crisis continues. As a result, nine Colorado CHCs have done furloughs or layoffs of more than 600 staff, 10% of the CHC workforce statewide.

CHCs are also facing high prices and difficulty obtaining personal protective equipment (PPE). CHCs, like other health care providers are experiencing delays in supply shipments, partial shipments, and the need to institute practices to make PPE last as long as possible.

Congress provided emergency supplemental funding for the CHCs, which provides some stop-gap help. Colorado CHCs are grateful to Colorado’s Members of Congress for their support. However, the emergency supplemental funding provided so far does not cover the need, nor does it provide stability for longer-term planning or staff retention.

CHCs report that this emergency funding will cover only a few payrolls at some CHCs or a few months of lost revenue at others, while this crisis is expected to stretch on for longer.
More help is needed for CHCs to continue to care for their communities through this public health crisis and to continue to meet preventive and primary health care needs now and into the future. The National Association of Community Health Centers has submitted a funding request to Congress to help CHCs through this crisis and provide stability for five years to assure CHCs survive beyond COVID-19 and are stabilized to continue to meet the preventive and primary care needs of their patients and communities. The request encompasses three areas:

- Immediate and emergency funding in order to keep CHC doors open
- Ensure long-term stable funding for CHCs and critical workforce needs as well as long-overdue infrastructure investment, including technology and facility updates
- Statutory changes to ensure best practices and reimbursement for services, including telehealth

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To interview Ms. Anderson, please contact Melissa Wright at (303) 867-9554, or mwright@cchn.org.

The Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN) is the unified voice for Colorado’s 21 Community Health Centers (CHCs) and their patients. CHCs provide a health care home for more than 830,000 of their community members – more than one in seven people in Colorado - from 63 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 https://cchn.org/.

To learn more about careers at Community Health Centers, please visit https://missiondrivencareers.org/.