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Community Health Centers Mark Progress at One-Year Stimulus Anniversary
Healthier Communities and People, Thanks to Recovery Act Investment

People and communities are healthier thanks to the investment in America's Community Health Centers from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), also known as the "economic stimulus."

The law, enacted one year ago next week, provided funds that helped Health Centers expand care to the growing numbers of unemployed and uninsured people who were quickly filling up their waiting rooms. To increase capacity and serve more people, many Health Centers were able to keep or recruit new staff, such as nurses, doctors and dentists, and renovate or even build new facilities.

"The economic stimulus investment has made a substantial difference at Michigan Community Health Centers and in communities across the state," said Kim Sibilsy, Executive Director, Michigan Primary Care Association. "Michigan Health Centers have been able to reach more patients who need care, but the numbers alone don't tell the whole success story. Health Centers are seeing families who are struggling because of the recession. Many of them had health insurance before and now don't. The stimulus has made it possible for Health Centers in our state to reach out to these new patients and show them the comprehensive, quality, accessible, affordable care provided at Community Health Centers can meet all of their health care needs under one roof so they can stay healthy during this challenging time."

Signed on February 17, 2009, the economic stimulus bill provided a one-time funding of \$2 billion for Health Centers across the country to expand care and create jobs. Since the economic stimulus funding was allocated, Health Centers have been able to expand their reach to 1 million patients, and nearly 600,000 uninsured. The stimulus funding also allowed them to respond to the growing health care demands of the uninsured in a variety of ways, such as by increasing hours of operation, adding new exam rooms, adding new health service delivery sites

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in medically underserved communities. As President Obama recently noted, “Health care isn't just about diagnosing patients and treating illness – it's about caring for people and promoting wellness. It's about emphasizing education and prevention, and helping people lead healthier lives so they don't get sick in the first place. And it works. Studies show that people living near a Health Center are less likely to go to the emergency room and less likely to have unmet critical medical needs.”

The economic stimulus funding was the right medicine at the right time and one year later the investment is still delivering results. It is important to remember, however, that this was one-time funding, and Michigan continues to face enormous challenges including a continuing state budget deficit, a critical shortage of health care professionals, over 1 million residents lacking health insurance coverage, and a Medicaid program that is in jeopardy.

“Continued support of Community Health Centers is critical now more than ever so they can provide health care to more people in our state,” said Sibilsky.

Nationally, uninsured patient visits are up by 21 percent and are likely to continue increasing as the economic recession lingers, according to the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC). To learn more about how the economic stimulus funding is still making a positive difference in communities, visit the NACHC economic stimulus map at www.nachc.com.

Today, 31 Community Health Centers provide quality, comprehensive, community-based, culturally-oriented primary health care for nearly 600,000 individuals at over 160 delivery sites across Michigan. Each Health Center's services are tailored to meet the unique needs of their patients and surrounding communities, and are governed by a patient-majority board of directors.

About Michigan Primary Care Association

Michigan Primary Care Association has been the voice for Community Health Centers and other community-based providers in Michigan since 1980. It is a leader in building a healthy society in which all residents have convenient and affordable access to quality health care. MPCA's mission is to promote, support, and develop comprehensive, accessible, and affordable quality community-based primary care services to everyone in Michigan. For more information, please visit www.mPCA.net or call 517.381.8000.

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