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Congress to vote on plan that could cut health center funding

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(NEWSCHANNEL 3) – The U.S. House of Representatives will likely vote this week on a plan that could cut funding to local health centers.

Communities across the country have federally qualified health centers like the Family Health Center in Kalamazoo. Those centers serve thousands of people a year, and many offer payment plans for those with limited or no insurance.

Arthur Rogers visits the Kalamazoo Family Health Center for regular check-ups for his emphysema. He and his wife, Valla, are among the 20,000 people who come through the doors of one of six branches each year.

For many who visit the center, it's the only place they can afford.

“Particularly the under-served and uninsured,” said Denise Crawford, CEO Family Health Center.

Now health centers are worried about a proposed \$1.3 billion budget cut awaiting a vote in Washington D.C.

“Quite honestly, it's devastating,” said Crawford.

Health centers don't yet know what such a cut would mean to each facility specifically, but Crawford knows what it would do to the Family Health Center if it was a straight across the board cut.

“If we had to cut 60 percent of the population that we currently serve, that would be about 12,000 people,” said Crawford.

Newschannel 3 spoke to Congressman Fred Upton about the budget and the health center in particular on Tuesday.

“They do provide good access,” said Rep. Upton.

Still, Upton says Congress is working to cut spending overall, and says he'd vote in favor of a cut that's not as deep.

“I'll be supporting an amendment that's not nearly as harsh,” said Rep. Upton. “I'll support an alternative that's only a five percent reduction.”

Still, folks like the Rogers hope that cuts can be avoided altogether.

“It's going to hurt a lot of people,” said Arthur Rogers, “shouldn't gut the funds, raise it up, give them more money to work with to take care of patients who need it.”

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