

South Florida Hospital News[®] and HEALTHCARE REPORT

THE REGION'S MONTHLY NEWSPAPER FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS & PHYSICIANS

Funding for Community Health Centers Reauthorized

Intense concern and worry over funding is alleviated after Congress passed legislation to fix the health center funding cliff with a two-year extension and \$600 million in additional dollars to further support health center operations and address unmet needs. The news came as a huge comfort to Community Health of South Florida Inc. (CHI) and other community health centers nationwide who had been waiting on reauthorization of funding since October 2017.

The good news didn't stop there. Congress also reauthorized funding for two years for Teaching Health Center GME programs such as the Brodes H. Hartley Teaching Health Center at Community Health of South Florida, Inc. CHI's teaching health center develops and trains medical residents to address a looming shortage of primary care physicians. The extension of funding for that program helps realign finances by closely linking them to the true cost of training physicians in primary care specialties

"This is a win, win situation for everyone," said Brodes H. Hartley Jr., President and CEO of CHI. "It's a win for the 83,000 patients that we care for every year. We manage diseases for them, heal their ailments and care for them physically and mentally. This is also a win for our employees who devote themselves to caring for these people and a win for our residents learning to care for a diverse population."

The victory comes just days after an all-out advocacy effort. CHI employees adorned themselves in red to show a passion and urgency for healthcare funding. The National "Red Alert Day," on February 6th prompted CHI staff and people across the country to post photos on social media and make phone calls and emails to U.S. Congressional and Senate leaders urging them to address the funding cliff facing community health centers nationwide. The health of 27 million Americans was in jeopardy. Those people rely on Community Health Centers to provide high quality, affordable healthcare.

Licensed Mental Health Technician and Coordinator for Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement, Celia Mion, wore red pants on Red Alert Day in honor of CHI's mission.

"I really believe in bringing healthcare to all people," said Mion. "We need it not only for people who can't afford it, but also the people who rely on these programs to improve their lives regardless of economics."



Community Health of South Florida, Inc. staff wore red on Red Alert Day to highlight the need for funding Community Health Centers.

Latricia Segura-Branch PharmD, a pharmacist at CHI wore a large red flower in her hair along with fellow pharmacy staff. She knows the dire need and said without support for life-saving medications and medication management services that community health centers provide, patients are in danger.

"If there were no pharmacies in community health centers especially 340B pharmacies, patients would go without the proper medications that they need," said Segura-Branch.

According to the National Association for Community Health Centers (NACHC) the extension of funds secures healthcare for 27 million patients by ensuring thousands of sites will be able to keep their doors open.

For those tasked with the job of molding the next generation of doctors, reauthorization of funding for teaching health centers is a big burden relieved from their hearts and minds.

"Traditionally underserved rural and urban areas face the greatest challenges recruiting physicians," said Dr. Saint Anthony Amofah, Chief Academic Officer and Chief Medical Officer. "We are so grateful that the federal government is helping with this investment to grow our own physicians. This goes a long way in addressing key healthcare gaps among some of the most vulnerable people in our communities."