



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Illinois Primary Health Care Association: New State Budget Increases Health Care Investment in Underserved Communities, Protects Vital Safety Net

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Primary Health Care Association, representing the state’s community health centers, today released the following statement in response to the Illinois Legislature approving the state’s Fiscal Year 2021 budget:

“Today, the Illinois General Assembly made a significant investment in the health care systems that care for underserved communities throughout the state. The Illinois Primary Health Care Association applauds the General Assembly and Governor Pritzker for working together during unprecedented times to do what is necessary to protect the health of our state during this public health crisis. In addition to thanking budget and Medicaid leaders such as Sens. Heather Steans, Andy Manar, Omar Aquino and Dave Syverson, and Reps. Greg Harris and Tom Demmer, IPHCA would like to thank all the members of the Black and Latino Caucuses for fighting so hard for their communities. IPHCA and its members look forward to personally thanking the dozens of legislators who fought for community health centers (CHCs). **Under this new state budget, CHCs receive nearly \$200 million in emergency funds to address COVID-19 challenges, as well as a long-term investment to increase their base level of funding.**

Unfortunately, the African American and Latino communities that many of our centers serve are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Although African Americans make up just 15 percent of Illinois’ population, they represent 18 percent of positive cases and 32 percent of COVID-related deaths. And while Latinos make up 17 percent of Illinois’ population, they represent 30 percent of positive cases and 18 percent of COVID-related deaths. Members of the Black and Latino caucuses know this reality all too well and they fought hard for greater healthcare protections and investments for their communities. Due to their hard work and an unwavering commitment to protect against this crisis, hard hit communities throughout the state will receive the support they need and deserve.

Tragically, racial disparities in our health care system are not new. In fact, community health centers were established more than 50 years ago in an effort to help address socioeconomic and racial disparities by improving health care access. Today’s move by the General Assembly to boost financial support for community health centers in underserved areas is an important first step towards fixing the inequities in our healthcare system and helping these communities avoid any future harm when the next public health crisis comes.

COVID-19 has also taken a financial toll on community health centers. While social distancing and cancellation of non-emergency services has absolutely been the right thing to do to stop the spread of this virus, it has resulted in steep revenue losses that are used to pay for staff, supplies and other operating expenses. Despite these challenges, community health centers have stepped up to meet their patients’ needs by transitioning to telehealth and partnering with the Pritzker Administration to ramp up testing in the hard-hit African American and Latino communities. CHCs have organized more than 125 drive-through, walk-up and mobile stations which have tested more than 100,000 Illinoisans in a matter of weeks. Today, with the support of the General Assembly and Gov. Pritzker’s Administration, community health centers will receive the support needed to overcome these financial challenges and focus on getting their communities through the crisis.

“For far too long, our underserved communities, especially communities of color, have not received the healthcare investment that they deserve. COVID-19 put a spotlight on those unfortunate inequities. I’m proud, though, that our legislators, especially the Medicaid leaders and all of the members of the Black and Latino caucuses, and Gov. Pritzker recognized the problem and have taken a significant step to protect and strengthen our system. We look



forward to continuing our work together, guided by our belief that high-quality healthcare is a right, not a privilege,” said Jordan Powell, CEO + President of the Illinois Primary Health Care Association.

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ABOUT IL PRIMARY HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATION

IPHCA is a health care trade association representing Illinois’ 51 community health centers that collectively serve more than 1.4 million patients at 390 sites statewide. Community health centers provide accessible, comprehensive and integrated services and are known for providing high quality outcomes while substantially reducing health care expenditures, saving the state of Illinois nearly \$2 billion on an annual basis according to an independent economic analysis.