

**For Immediate Release**

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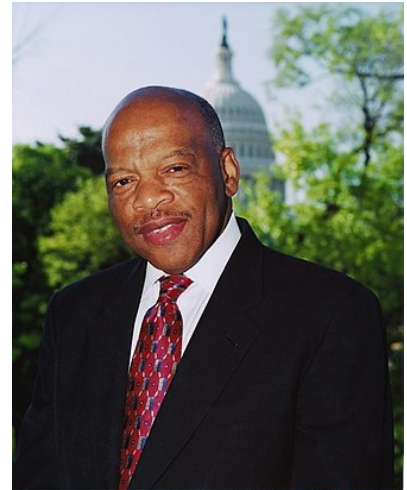
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## **IPHCA Mourns the Passing of Congressman John Lewis**

Over the weekend, we were saddened to learn of the passing of civil rights champion and dear friend of the Community Health Center Movement, Congressman John Lewis.

Congressman Lewis understood the important mission of Community Health Centers in offering vital health services to people in underserved communities regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay. Having visited Community Health Centers several times in his home state of Georgia, he spoke passionately in support of them during his time in Congress. He was also the recipient of the National Association of Community Health Centers' (NACHC) National Leadership Award and served as an Honorary Committee Member of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Health Center Program.



Born to sharecroppers, Lewis began his career as a youth activist with the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and was one of the original Freedom Riders. At just 23, he was the youngest speaker at the March on Washington where Martin Luther King, Jr. famously delivered his *I Have a Dream* speech. Just two years later, in 1965, he put his life on the line for voting rights for Black Americans, helping to lead hundreds across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, where he and fellow marchers were met by heavily armed state and local police who attacked them with clubs, fracturing Lewis' skull. Images from the incident shocked the nation and galvanized support for the *Voting Rights Act of 1965*, signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson.

He went on to be elected to the Atlanta City Council and eventually the United States House of Representatives, where he served 17 terms. Lewis famously said, "When you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have to speak up. You have to say something; you have to do something." These words guided his career, which centered around the fight for racial and social justice and led him to spearhead several anti-poverty, education, and health care initiatives.

In 2011, President Barack Obama awarded Lewis the nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, calling him the "conscience of the United States Congress" for his courage and unwavering commitment to justice. More recently, Lewis marched alongside a new generation of activists protesting the killing of George Floyd and systemic oppression as a part of the Black Lives Matter movement.

At 80 years old, Lewis was the longest serving member of the Congressional Black Caucus before succumbing to his battle with stage IV pancreatic cancer. His death is a tremendous loss for the people of Atlanta, his colleagues in Congress, and advocates for a more free, equitable, and just world everywhere.

