



Bringing Health Care To Schools For Student Success

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CARE

STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE

UNITED STATES HOUSE

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH

ON

H.R. 4230:

THE SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CLINIC

ESTABLISHMENT ACT

OF 2007

DECEMBER 4, 2007

STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE ENERGY AND COMMERCE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee,

I am Ricardo Guzman, the Chief Executive Officer of the Community Health and Social Services Center, a comprehensive Federally Qualified Health Center with two community health centers and one school-based health clinic in Detroit, Michigan. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of our nation's health care safety net providers and to emphasize the importance of your support of school-based health clinics. The National Assembly on School-Based Health Care, which I represent today, supports the continued growth of the consolidated health center program. As this committee begins its consideration of H.R. 4230, The School-Based Health Clinic Establishment Act of 2007 and the Health Centers Renewal Act of 2007, I urge you to consider the needs of underserved populations throughout the country.

As Congress moves toward reaffirming its support for a health care safety net system, it is incumbent upon each of you, not to leave children and youth behind in this process. As a manager of health centers, I am here today to tell you that school-based health clinics are an important health care safety net provider for children and adolescents and it is time for Congress to support the life altering work they do every day. I want to thank Congresswoman Hooley for her leadership in introducing, H.R. 4230, The School-Based Health Clinic Establishment Act of 2007, which authorizes a grant program to support and expand school-based health clinics nationwide.

For Members here today who might not be as familiar with this model of health care, let me tell more about school-based health clinics and the comprehensive care and mental health support they offer. These programs are like doctors offices in the schools. There are 1,700 school-based health clinics in 44 states, DC and Puerto Rico. These programs provide services ranging from acute medical care, chronic disease management, preventive medical care, health education, mental health and in some programs, oral health services. They serve as a medical home and as a secondary access point for the students they see. When a medical home already exists the relationship between the two has been documented as complementary not duplicative.

The daily educational experience of children and adolescents can be optimized by reducing obstacles to learning created by poor health. In our school-based health clinics, we work closely with teachers, parents, and school administrators to serve students in the best possible manner.

A nationwide poll found that:

Voters look to the federal government to set aside specific funds for the clinics. Yet only 36 percent of programs report receiving any funds from the federal government to support their efforts.

Voters also believe that school-based health clinics should provide a wide range of services including prevention and treatment of chronic diseases such as asthma and diabetes. They are also supportive of providing students in school with health education on eating right and exercising, treatment of acute illness and sudden trauma. The great majority of existing programs provide these services.

The mental health of students particularly the need for assistance with grief, peer pressure, bullying and suicide prevention is of special concern to voters, and school-based health clinics are responding to this need as well.

School-based health care is vital to my community - and many like mine - because it provides unprecedented access to health, mental health and oral health services. The programs are designed with input from the community and school. Providers have the advantage of proximity and time with students, creating substantive relationships with high risk youth throughout their academic career.

In spite of the tremendous advantages afforded by school-based health clinics, significant policy and financial barriers threaten the sustainability of the model and prevent widespread replication. While we are fortunate in Detroit to sponsor and fund our program through our community health center, only 22% of programs nationwide are eligible for this funding. Therefore the vast majority of clinics operating throughout the country do not have access to the same sources of funding that we have. There is no specific federal funding program for school-based health clinics. Because of inadequate funding for preventive and mental health care services in primary care settings, school-based health clinics experience great difficulty in integrating and sustaining their comprehensive scope of services. For example since the proliferation of Medicaid managed care, school-based health clinics have had greater difficulty being recognized as Medicaid service providers. Even when the clinics are recognized as providers, services outside of the traditional doctor patient visit are not reimbursed by the Medicaid program. These services are central to the success of the model and are identified by sponsors and insurers alike as the model's added value.

Therefore, as the committee enters into discussions regarding the various models of health care currently administering to populations in need, I urge you to include H.R. 4230, The School-Based Health Clinic Establishment Act of 2007 in this discussion. The authorization of a grant program to support and expand school-based health clinics nationwide is an urgent need if we are to allow all

students an opportunity to grow up healthy, strong and achieving their educational potential.

Our nation is hungry for change. Americans are no longer willing to accept their ineffective health care system – the kind of system where a child can die from something as treatable a dental abscess. Momentum is building around improving children’s health access and quality in states across the country and in the halls of Congress. School-based health clinics must be front and center as we transform our nation’s health care system to gain equity, access, and opportunity for all children.

Thank you.