

Testimony of Katherine Grant - Davis
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Before the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC
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Good Afternoon. My name is Katherine Grant Davis and I am here representing New Jersey's health centers, which include community, migrant, and homeless health centers. I am the Executive Director of the New Jersey Primary Care Association, a membership organization of health centers dedicated for advocating on behalf of the medically underserved.

I want to thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today and for the unwavering support the Subcommittee has given to America's health centers. I want you to know that your steadfast commitment to the Health Centers program and its expansion has made a real difference in the lives of millions of medically underserved Americans across the country including my state. Earlier this year, I received a letter from a grandmother, who wrote to thank our PCA for its work in opening the Community Health Center of Glassboro, NJ where she lives. She wrote that her daughter, a young uninsured mother of two children, who suffers from severe asthma, now has medical care and access to medications through the new health center. She wrote:

“I cannot thank your program enough for opening the Community Health Center of Glassboro where [my daughter] saw a doctor today and received prescriptions for her asthma and for a bronchial infection. She will be able to get well and breathe comfortably thanks to you. Because of you, she will be able to take her son for a bike ride on her bike and run and be outside when it is cold or very hot without wheezing, and no longer have pain with each breath. Do you realize what a gift you have given her?”

Chairman Deal, Ranking Member Green and Members of the Committee, I want you to realize the gift you have given to this Glassboro, NJ mother and the 15 million people currently served by health centers – the gift of a medical home where they can obtain high-quality health care

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regardless of her insurance status or her ability to pay. Indeed, access to care at health centers allows individuals to be productive members of their families and their communities. I would like to ask permission to have the letter from this New Jersey grandmother inserted in the Record.

New Jersey's health centers deliver comprehensive primary care in 90 sites to more than 322,000 persons. 88% of our patients are people of color, 78% have incomes at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level, and nearly 45% are uninsured. New Jersey's 21 health centers form an essential component of the state's safety net for health care services. We are committed to providing high quality, comprehensive health care services in federally designated medically underserved areas and underserved populations.

New Jersey health centers provide a comprehensive set of primary care services and enabling services to all people, regardless of their ability to pay. Our centers not only provide care to families, they also provide care to high risk and special populations including people with changing insurance coverage and those with chronic conditions and disabilities. Research has repeatedly shown that these groups cost the system a disproportionate share of available resources and we are committed to providing them with the best service in a cost-effective manner. And our record of success is hard to ignore. 1 out of every 15 poor persons in New Jersey is served by a health center. Since 2000 we have increased capacity in every county in New Jersey except for two. Dental, medical, and mental health capacity have been increased in over 80% of our existing centers. We have doubled the number of uninsured they we see in just 5 years. However, in communities across our state, the need to expand health centers is still growing steadily.

Our PCA is committed to the expansion of the health center model of care in New Jersey. Toward that goal and with the support of HRSA's Bureau of Primary Health Care and NACHC, the NJPCA provides training and technical assistance to the health centers in our state in order to assist our centers in carrying out the requirements of the statute and program requirements.

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NJPCA also conducts extensive planning and implementation activities to ensure the success of the health center expansion effort in the highest need areas of New Jersey.

I am also happy to report that the NJPCA and our health centers are major forces for community-wide collaborative efforts to expand access to underserved individuals and families. We have rolled up our sleeves and have joined together to form partnerships with other safety net providers that truly bring people into care and improve the health of entire communities. As an example, we are working hand in hand with the New Jersey Hospital Association to ensure that patients are triaged to our centers since we are a more appropriate setting for non emergent patients. In addition, we are working with the Susan G. Komen Foundation to ensure that all women, regardless of insurance status, are screened for breast cancer and that they have a medical home. Lastly, we were one of the original partners of the RX for New Jersey program, which is a company started by the drug manufacturers in New Jersey. This program is designed to ensure that patients, who can not afford their medication, have access to free prescriptions. We stand ready to continue our activities in all of these areas to ensure that the health centers in our state can build on their record of success over the years and in this current expansion effort.

Health centers are doing the job expected of them and they need the continued support of this Subcommittee, and indeed of the entire Congress, in order to continue fulfilling the long-range plan endorsed by the President and the Congress to expand the reach of the Health Centers program in underserved communities. That is why we urge the Subcommittee to provide a straightforward reauthorization of the Health Centers program through FY 2011 at an initial funding level of \$1.963 billion for FY 2007. Our New Jersey health centers believe that a straightforward reauthorization of the program is the best path forward to the continued success of the Health Centers program in expanding access to cost-effective, high-quality health care services to underserved communities.

Reauthorization of the program would renew the most important requirements of the Health Centers program, including governance by a patient-majority board, health centers' openness to all regardless of ability to pay, location in medically-underserved areas, and the provision of

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comprehensive preventive and primary care services. In particular, our centers would not be able to help change the health status of their patients without patient-majority boards. Nothing succeeds like community control and health centers know that better than anyone else. Our health center boards are stewards of the health of fellow neighbors. Health centers are truly consumer-driven – they put patients in the driver’s seat to tailor services to best meet the needs of their local communities. NJPCA and New Jersey health centers urge the Subcommittee to reaffirm these core principles as you consider the reauthorization of the Health Centers program.

Thank you for this opportunity to talk with you. If there are any questions, I would be pleased to answer them at this time.