



"Access to Quality Health Care for All South Carolina"

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SCPHCA Thanks Legislators for Restoring Health Care Funding

Columbia, SC- The South Carolina Primary Health Care Association (SCPHCA) applauds the General Assembly for restoring funding to crucial health programs that benefit the state's neediest populations. The State House reversed a proposal to cut \$50 million from already struggling health programs from next year's state budget. The proposed cuts targeted programs that would have limited health care access for low-income children, eliminated programs that help patients get the medicine they need including one for AIDS patients, reduced the prescription limit for Medicaid patients to only three a month, and completely ended cancer screenings funded by the state.

"It would have been devastating for these cuts to go into effect at a point in time when people and communities need help the most," says SCPHCA CEO Lathran J. Woodard. "Community health centers have seen a substantial increase in uninsured and underinsured patients seeking primary health services, a result of people losing health insurance during these difficult economic times. I am happy that efforts were made to restore some funding to programs such as the Medicaid prescription drug benefit, which would have been detrimental to those who suffer from various chronic conditions and co-morbidities requiring several maintenance medications. Severely cutting vital programs to children, the sick, and underserved populations would have been unacceptable."

Community health centers are set to receive \$200,000 from the budget bill to partially offset the cost of providing health care services to additional uninsured patients. While this final amount is far less than what is needed, we are encouraged that the General Assembly continues to recognize the important role community health centers play in providing quality primary care to a large number of individuals in the state.

The SCPHCA is the membership organization that represents all of South Carolina's community health centers, which are an integral part of the primary health care system in our state. In South Carolina, the 19 CHCs and the statewide migrant health voucher program provided quality, affordable, and community-based preventive and primary health care services to 303,115 patients through 163 service sites in 2009. With a presence throughout the state (40 of the 46 counties), community health centers help reduce racial and ethnic health disparities, inappropriate Emergency Room usage, and overall health care costs.