



## FOCUS ON COMMUNITY HEALTH

Community Health Centers provide critical front line and primary care service to the most vulnerable populations and communities in Washington State. These services are more important than ever in a time when health systems are being overwhelmed by the pressures of responding to the COVID 19 pandemic. In order for Community Health Centers to meet growing demand and continue their services, we recommend for the following fixes to the CARES Act.

### **Expansion of Paycheck Protection Program Eligibility for CHCs Employing 500+ staff**

Even relatively small health centers can easily employ more than 500 individuals – often, providers who work in hospitals or private practice clinics will take part-time work at CHCs because they believe in the mission. Many Washington CHCs have been forced to furlough or lay off staff in the midst of this crisis.

### **Long-Term Reauthorization of Community Health Center Fund and National Health Service Corps**

The CHC Fund (which accounts for 70% of federal grant support to CHCs) and NHSC expired last September and have been chugging along on several successive continuing resolutions. This has the effect of making both lenders and NHSC providers nervous, fearing that their investments or jobs (respectively) may not be secure.

### **Reimbursement of Telehealth Services at Medicare Rates**

The CARES Act wisely allows CHCs to conduct telehealth visits for Medicare beneficiaries, but the reimbursement is far below the cost of providing the

service and sets up a payment system different from the one CHCs normally use. CHCs would be helped by allowing them to bill at “Medicare PPS” rate.

### **Questions**

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