Over 10,400 Community Health Centers Might Lose Major Funding

Inaction in Congress could mean more than 9 million people won't have access to health care within months.

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On September 30, federal funding for Community Health Centers (CHCs) expired, and as of right now, Congress does not seem eager to ensure that it is restored. Lost amidst the coverage of the chaos caused by the Trump administration's repeated attacks on the Affordable Care Act and Congress's on-again, off-again attempts to stabilize the health care marketplaces, the failure of members of Congress to pass legislation to fund CHCs has flown under the radar. However, should Congress fail to act quickly to restore that funding, the results would be catastrophic, particularly for the medically underserved and uninsured individuals who rely upon the services of Community Health Centers for their care.

In the absence of a funding renewal from Congress, the more than 10,400 community health centers in America could lose up to 70 percent of their federal grant funding within a matter of months. Such inaction would lead to the closure of an estimated 2,800 community health centers, causing over 9 million people to lose access to health care and leaving 50,000 health care workers without jobs. Right now, with their financial future still uncertain, more than 1 in 4 community health centers have reported difficulty in hiring and retaining staff, while 41 percent of community health centers have indicated plans to lay off staff.

Currently, the most promising piece of legislation for health care advocates is the Community Health Investment, Modernization and Excellence (CHIME) Act of 2017, which has been collecting dust for the last 3 weeks while waiting for the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions to take it up. If passed, The CHIME Act would extend community health center funding for 5 years.

AIDS United encourages Congress to quickly restore funding to community health centers, but stands firm in our opposition to any legislation that would rob vital prevention and public health funding in the process.

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