

NACHC P&I Forum 2024 California's Top Priorities

January 2024



General Community Health Center Background

- In California there are nearly 1,300 community health centers providing care to 7.7 million people – that is 1 in 5 Californians.
- Community health centers provide the full spectrum of care, from primary care to dental to behavioral health care and a variety of enabling and wraparound services.
- In many rural communities throughout California, community health centers serve as the only source of medical and wellness care for middle and working-class families in the region.

Health Center Funding

- CHCs need additional support to address rising inflation, workforce challenges, and to expand the services available to existing health center patients.
- Without an extension of mandatory funding by March 8, health centers may be forced to cut staff, hours, and services which impede access to care for California's most vulnerable residents.
- With additional funding, CHCs can retain their current workforce, recruit a new generation of health center staff, expand into new communities, and increase access to expanded services such as behavioral health and dental care.
- There is bipartisan support to extend and increase health center funding; we are urging maximum funding before March 8.

Workforce

- California is experiencing a serious workforce shortage, particularly in community health centers. The shortage is not limited to providers – our health centers are struggling to recruit and retain ancillary and administrative staff as well. In 2023, the average 12-month turnover reported by CHCs was 27.4% which jumped from 9.5% in 2020 and 19.4% in 2021.
- Health centers reported high vacancy rates and prolonged periods of time to fill staff vacancies for key positions. Recruiting a physician, dentist, and nurse practitioner was the most challenging. Clinics reported needing an average of 27.4 weeks to fill a physician vacancy, 21.8 weeks to fill a dentist and 23 weeks to fill a nurse practitioner vacancy.
- California passed a healthcare worker minimum wage law increasing the minimum wage for CHC workers to \$21 in 2024, \$22 in 2025, and \$25 in 2027. CHCs want to increase wages for its employees but will need federal regulatory support to help sustain these increased wages because of PPS limitations.
- California is amid a behavioral health transformation; the state will need support to meet the workforce needs for successful implementation where health centers play an integral role in care delivery.

340B

- CHCs invest 340B savings into activities that advance their goal of ensuring affordable access to critical health services for medically underserved patients.
- We ask for your help in protecting the 340B Drug Discount Program by supporting legislation that helps grantees, like CHCs, continue to access these important savings.

OUR ASKS: *Reauthorize mandatory health center grant funding; extend the National Health Service Corps funding and Teaching Health Center GME funding with annual increases in all programs; and protect the 340B drug discount program so health centers can continue to provide excellent care for anyone that walks in our doors.*

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