

# 2017 Federal Policy Priorities

**1. Maintain \$5.1 billion in annual funding for Health Centers and permanently address the primary care cliff.** Last year's bipartisan passage of H.R. 2 secured \$3.6 billion a year in mandatory funding for Health Centers in Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017. Congress should maintain this investment and keep the annual discretionary funding level at \$5.1 billion, while considering a permanent solution to put Health Centers' funding on stable footing.

**2. Invest in the primary care workforce.** The biggest factor limiting Health Centers' ability to serve additional patients in need is the challenge they face in recruiting and retaining qualified, culturally-competent, mission-driven providers. Continued investment in programs like the National Health Service Corps (which provides scholarships and loan repayment to clinicians willing to serve in shortage areas) and the Teaching Health Centers program (which supports residency training in Health Centers) must go hand-in-hand with other incentives to support a strong clinical workforce in Health Centers.

**3. Ensure adequate payment for Health Center services.** Appropriate reimbursement from third-party payors like Medicaid, Medicare and Qualified Health Plans is essential to ensuring the growth and sustainability of Health Centers' operations. Health Centers' unique Medicaid and Medicare payments are intended to cover the comprehensive set of services that are provided by the center in accordance with the health center model of care and Medicaid and Medicare statute. Congress and the Administration should preserve these payment systems and ensure full participation by Health Centers in provider networks.

**4. Maintain adequate funding and support for sustaining the 340B Drug Discount Program.** The 340B Drug Discount Program provides critical support to Health Center patients who need assistance to afford their prescriptions. It also serves as an important source of revenue for Health Centers which enables them to provide access to comprehensive, high quality health care services for the medically underserved. The Administration and Congress should continue to support and fully fund this vital program.

**5. Promote policies that recognize Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants as essential primary care providers.** Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants play an integral role on the care delivery teams at Health Centers, however, some policies that relate to reimbursement don't treat them as such. The Administration and Congress need to recognize these highly trained and skilled clinicians by passing laws that allow the services they provide to be reimbursed adequately and equitably.

Approved by BOD 8/2016