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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 18, 2017

As Funding Cliff Looms, Louisiana's Health Centers Need Congress to Act

Community Health Centers across the country are facing a 70% cut in Federal funding, threatening access to care for 27 million patients.

Without Congressional action, Community Health Centers across the United States face a 70% cutback in program funding by September 30, 2017. Community Health Centers currently provide primary care, oral, and mental health services to more than 27 million Americans. Last year alone, Louisiana's 34 Community Health Center organizations collectively served over 380,000 patients and saw over a million patient visits.

The Community Health Center Program is financed through a combination of discretionary funding passed by Congress in the annual appropriation process, and mandatory funding made available via the Community Health Center Fund created in 2010.

After initially providing \$11 billion over five years for the operation, expansion, and construction of health centers throughout the nation, Congress extended the Community Health Center Fund in 2015 for two additional years (FY16 and FY17). **The extension of mandatory funding expires September 30. If Congress fails to act, Health Centers nationwide would be forced to cope with a 70% (\$3.6 billion) loss in federal funding. In Louisiana, this means \$62 million would be stripped away from our state's 34 Federally Qualified Health Center organizations.**

A cut of this magnitude would have an immediate impact on Louisiana's Community Health Centers. While some facilities would be forced to close, others would be forced to reduce services, lay off employees, and leave thousands of patients without access to a healthcare provider.

Fortunately, Community Health Centers have had a long history of bipartisan support. Lawmakers on all sides of the political spectrum understand that health centers provide the highest quality of patient care while saving taxpayer money. We are proud of the fact that every member of Louisiana's Congressional delegation has expressed their support for Louisiana's Community Health Centers.

While health centers are known for providing high quality preventive and primary health care to patients, they also work to stimulate economic growth and generate cost savings for communities across Louisiana. By keeping patients out of the emergency room and emphasizing preventive care, health centers save Louisiana's healthcare system nearly \$450 million annually. In fact, health centers serve 13.4% of Louisiana's Medicaid population while accounting for 0.8% of the state's overall Medicaid expenses. As a result of this cut, patients would almost certainly be forced back into emergency rooms for care, effectively driving up costs for everyone.

We understand that Congress has many priorities to tackle over the next few weeks. By immediately ensuring continued funding for health centers, Congress can begin their session with a bipartisan win and a springboard toward other legislative accomplishments.

We humbly urge Louisiana's Congressional delegation to be champions for the health center program. As we quickly approach the funding cliff, words are no longer sufficient. Louisiana's Community Health Centers and the 380,000 patients they serve are demanding action.

About the Louisiana Primary Care Association

The Louisiana Primary Care Association (LPCA) represents 34 federally funded, private, non-profit and public Community Health Centers across Louisiana that serve more than 380,000 patients annually. LPCA promotes community-based health services through advocacy, education, and collaboration with community partners. Our goal is to ensure that every Louisianan has access to affordable, quality, primary care services. For more information, visit www.LPCA.net.