



ALASKA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Committed To Advancing Alaska's Public Health Since 1978

ALPHA RESOLUTION 2-2008

State Funding Support for Community Health Centers

Sponsor: Alaska Primary Care Association
Shelley Hughes

WHEREAS the Alaska Public Health Association recognizes the necessity of improving access to primary care for all Alaskans as one of the key ingredients in improving the public health of all Alaskans; and

WHEREAS Community Health Centers (CHCs) provide access to high quality, cost-effective primary care through a network of 26 CHCs with 140+ delivery sites in Alaska to areas and populations that otherwise would not have access to primary care, providing services to more than 80,000 people through 360,000 patient visits;¹ and

WHEREAS CHCs are open to all residents, regardless of insurance status; provide reduced cost care based on ability to pay through a sliding fee scale; offer barrier reduction services such as transportation and language translation; and provide services that increase health outcomes such as case management, health education, and chronic disease management; and

WHEREAS in 2007, CHCs provided access to care for 6,420 senior citizens 65 years and older from across the state who are finding it increasingly difficult to locate primary care physicians willing to accept new Medicare patients; and

WHEREAS Alaska's CHCs serve populations and areas where there is no competitive marketplace, providing access and a health care home to individuals who otherwise would not have their basic medical, dental and behavioral health needs met.

WHEREAS in a gubernatorial forum on health care held in 2006, now Governor Sarah Palin stated the following regarding CHCs:

"We have to remember also what our constitution says about the service that you're providing: and it's Article 7 Section 4. It says that the Legislature shall provide for the promotion and protection of public health. So there is that duty, there is that obligation held by those who hold the state's purse strings. So between the state funding and working hard with the federal funding, an increase is what we're going to need. I want

you to not have to worry about this funding of such a vital service that's being provided for rural communities;" and

WHEREAS the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) has determined that the "overriding theme for future direction of the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services is helping individuals and families create safe and healthy communities"² and the DHSS Primary Care Office's mission to address health care access via health centers in Alaska is carried out through the use of funding to "enhance and support the current and emerging community health centers;" and

WHEREAS the Governor's Alaska Health Care Strategies Council's recommended in its final report in December of 2007 that CHCs be part of the solution to improve Alaskan's access to care and that "the state becoming more actively engaged as an active investor in the Community Health Center system through supplemental funding;" and

WHEREAS in 2008, the State of Alaska Legislature and Governor did demonstrate support for CHCs by providing \$3.85 million in first-time direct state support for Alaska's CHCs even though the line items were one-time increments; and

WHEREAS continued support from the state is crucial in sustaining and strengthening CHCs and their ability to provide access to cost-effective quality care for medically disenfranchised communities; and

WHEREAS the requested amount of state support will be offset because of savings to Medicaid and the fact that CHCs help maintain sustainable communities and nationally generate \$144,528,348 in economic benefits in communities;³ and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska Public Health Association supports an adequate financial appropriation from the state to strengthen and expand Community Health Centers and the safety net so that primary care access may be available to all Alaskans, including uninsured, under-insured and underserved Alaskans and that the public health of all Alaskans will be positively impacted.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska Public Health Association will promote and advocate for state funding support for Community Health Centers and engage in low and no-cost advocacy efforts for this purpose such as:

- Circulation of advocacy action requests to membership
- Circulation of advocacy action requests to partners and other individuals
- Posting of ALPHA resolutions on the Alaska Public Health Association's website
- Participation in email advocacy campaigns
- Contact with policy makers via phone, letter, email and/or in-person meetings
- Public testimony in legislative hearings, town hall meetings, and other public forums
- Contribution of op-ed articles and/or letters to the editor
- Contributions to radio programs via calling-in or scheduled interviews
- Distribution of this resolution statement to policy makers and key officials.

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, HRSA. Bureau of Primary Health Care Section 330 Grantees Uniform Data System (UDS) Calendar Year 2006 Data Alaska Rollup Report.

² Alaska Department of Health and Social Services 2009 Priorities, Commissioner Bill Hogan, July 30, 2008.

³ The Robert Graham Center, National Association of Community Health Centers and Capital Link. *Access Granted: The Primary Care Payoff*. August 2007.

Fiscal Impact

The fiscal impact on ALPHA by the proposed resolution will be minimal. This action will result in minor costs associated with sending this resolution and accompanying cover letter to the Governor and key political leaders.

Public Health Impact

This public health impact by the proposed resolution will be significant. This action will benefit public health by helping to increase the number of uninsured, low income, medically underserved Alaskans

1. Who will have ready access to health care services
2. Who will receive health care services

This action will also benefit public health through the promotion of prevention and patient-centered care, reducing the incidence of disease and improving overall health outcomes for Alaskans.