



2021 South Carolina Primary Health Care Association Legislative Agenda

The South Carolina Primary Health Care Association represents and supports the state's 23 community health centers (CHCs), which are providers of choice within in their communities. CHCs also serve a vital role as safety net providers for medically underserved and uninsured populations. These private, non-profit organizations provide an array of health care services, including but not limited to: primary medical care for all ages, dental, mental health, substance use disorder prevention and treatment, pharmacy, and more.

The Impact of CHCs in 2019:

- Treated more than 439,000 patients
- Generated 1.57M medical, dental and behavioral health patient visits
- Produced an economic impact of over \$914M
- Provided 7,017 direct and indirect jobs
- Saved Medicaid more than \$344M
- Accumulated \$104M in tax revenues

Thanks to the generosity of the General Assembly over the last eight years, CHCs have received millions in annual appropriations that have allowed CHCs to serve more communities by adding sites, personnel, and infrastructure to expand services for our patients. On behalf of our membership, the Association respectfully requests \$8M in operational funding to continue this progress; provide more access to health care; and save our state valuable money.

In addition, there are several policy issues that may come before the General Assembly which we will closely follow for their impact on CHCs, such as:

- Maintain a robust Medicaid program
 - A strong Medicaid program is important for both patients and health centers. Any legislation that changes the state's Medicaid program should ensure both coverage and continuity of access to care for health center patients and incentivize the comprehensive and quality services that health centers provide.
- Expansion of access to and use of broadband connectivity
 - Access to broadband connectivity is critical to ensuring patient utilization of telehealth services and digital health information. Legislation is needed that will expand infrastructure to allow for affordable broadband connectivity in rural and other underserved communities.
- Advancement of telehealth services utilization
 - Telehealth services often bridge the gaps of health care services when barriers such as provider shortages and transportation restrictions exist for in-person care. Legislation is needed that will allow for the advancement of telehealth utilization in all areas such as medical, dental, behavioral health, and certified diabetes educator services will ensure that telehealth is a viable service for health centers to offer.

- Broadening of pharmacy services provided
 - Broadening clinical services provided by pharmacists will enable them to further support and expand their role on the patient care team. For example, legislation that will expand pharmacist authorization to give immunizations. To address any expanded scope of services that occur, this reimbursement model may need to be reviewed to address those changes. Additionally, a strong 340B program ensures greater patient access to needed medication and other health care services provided by FQHCs. Support is needed to maintain the integrity of the 340B Drug Pricing Program's current reimbursement model by protecting the program from discriminatory contracting.
- Prevention and treatment of opioid/substance use disorders
 - Regulatory oversight surrounding prescription of opioids is critical to prevent over utilization and dependence on the medication by patients. Legislation is needed that is supportive of the treatment of opioid use disorders and prevention/treatment services health center provide.
- Expansion of the health care workforce
 - Additional medical providers are needed in medically underserved communities to expand access to health care. Legislation is needed to support the recruitment of health care workers to address shortages in rural and other underserved area.
- Limited liability protections for health care providers during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Limited liability protection is needed for health care providers like community health centers who are following public health guidance to protect them from potential frivolous lawsuits that may arise due to COVID-19.
- Support for secure exchange of health data to improve health outcomes
 - Health information technology is an important component of health center operations and ensures that their providers are providing safe, equitable, and efficient health care services. We are supportive of regulations that support secure exchanges of this data to be used to improve health outcomes in our state as long as measures to restrict the use of data and type of data required, such as financial data, are in place.

We happily offer our Association as a resource on these and other health care issues.

The SCPHCA and our membership would like to thank you for your support. We strive to ensure that all of South Carolina has access to quality and affordable health care. CHCs save lives and money. Any investment in CHCs is a sound contribution to our state's physical and economic health.