

# Investing in Health Centers – Preparing for the Future

Sustaining and Growing Health Centers to Meet Rising Demand

The last significant infrastructure investment in Community Health Centers was in 2009, when health centers served less than 18 million patients. With **30 million patients currently**, America's 1,400 non-profit health centers organizations with 14,500 service delivery locations operated on razor thin margins long before the COVID-19 pandemic and its detrimental impact.

The onset of COVID-19 brought billions of dollars of additional financial losses triggered by site closures, service disruptions, staff quarantine, layoffs and furloughs. These losses were exacerbated by additional unanticipated expenditures such as PPE, testing supplies, and infrastructure expenses (ventilation, tents, IT and telehealth equipment, space reconfigurations.)

Yet, **the demand for health center services is greater than ever**, especially by the growing number of newly unemployed and uninsured – human casualties of the pandemic economy. **The ability of health centers to fund or finance infrastructure remains even more limited, yet the need for infrastructure investment – whether construction, renovation, equipment, IT, telehealth/broadband and other capital infrastructure projects – continues to grow.**

Additional space and facilities will be critical for health centers to continue to serve the current 30 million patients and have the capacity to care for **8 to 11 million new patients** over a 4-year period. There is substantial need for critically important services such as oral health, mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) services like Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) and school-based health center services. Expansion is also needed to bring services to additional patient groups such as America's growing elderly population, public housing residents, our homeless, agricultural workers, rural residents and our Veterans, among others.

Health Center capital infrastructure needs total **at least \$13.1 billion**. Yet, the cost could be lowered **by leveraging other existing programs, such as HRSA Loan Guarantees, New Market Tax Credits, and the USDA Community Facilities Program.**

Health centers have proven their value to local economies again and again. **Even without infrastructure investment, in 2019 health centers generated 455,000 full time jobs** (253,000 direct, 202,000 indirect) **and created more than \$64.3 billion in economic activity.** Further infrastructure investments in community health centers will create economic opportunities and jobs for residents of rural and underserved communities.

## How you can help:

- **Support at least \$5.9 billion in dedicated infrastructure funding to address needed construction, renovation, equipment, IT, telehealth and broadband projects when the Congress considers an infrastructure package.**