



January 30, 2023

Dear Madam Chair Lee and members of the committee:

My name is Andrea Olson and I'm the Executive Director of Community Action Partnership of North Dakota (CAPND). We are a nonprofit organization representing the collective interests of our members and the low-income population of the state through representation and education for more than 40 years. The services provided by our regional Community Action Partnership agencies serve low-income families, many of those who need access to Community Health Services.

Both Community Action and Community Health Centers are working to address social determinants of health; those social and economic barriers that prevent people from getting healthy and sustaining health. There is a significant relationship between health and economic status; one impacts the other. Poor health can be the result of poverty, and poverty can be the result of poor health. When determinants of health work against some or are left unaddressed, they create health inequities which lead to worse outcomes and more expensive care.

North Dakota needs Community Health Centers; they play an integral role in our state's health care system serving over 36,000 patients a year. Of those patients, 74% lived in families earning less than 200% of the federal poverty level. Simultaneously, Community Action served over 20,000 people who fell within those same income guidelines i.e. we can attest to the significant need that Community Health Centers play and recognize that Health Centers routinely identify needs such as food, housing, transportation, and others, during primary care visits and refer patients to local community resources.

Additionally, health centers make important contributions to their local economy, generating local jobs as well as substantial cost savings for the overall health care system. Often a "main street anchor" of their communities, health centers in North Dakota employed 369 full-time workers and generated an economic impact of more than \$90 million in the year 2021.

We fully support an increase of \$2 million to support Community Health Centers. Adequate funding will allow an opportunity many families experiencing poverty across North Dakota will to achieve health and well-being.

Sincerely,

Andrea Olson, MS, CCAP, NCRT/NCRI
Community Action Partnership of North Dakota
Executive Director

