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The Ohio Association of Community Health Centers Comments on Governor’s Budget
Praises inclusion of Adult Dental Medicaid Program; Disappointment in elimination of critical Health Center funding

(Columbus, Ohio) – The Ohio Association of Community Health Centers (OACHC) today praised Governor Kasich’s proposed budget for maintaining the Adult Dental Medicaid Program, and keeping his promise to attack poverty head-on.

“Maintaining the Adult Dental Medicaid Program is not only fiscally prudent for the state of Ohio by allowing for timely preventive and ongoing care in the right location rather than costlier settings, like emergency departments, but its impact directly correlates with the overall health of our low-income children and families,” said OACHC President and CEO Randy Runyon.

Runyon went on to say, “The Governor’s decision to maintain the Adult Dental Medicaid Program will allow the primary oral health care safety net system, including Ohio’s Community Health Centers, to keep Ohioans as healthy as possible and when dental disease does occur, provide the care and management to improve patient outcomes while significantly reducing costs.”

According to the Ohio Department of Health, dental care remains the No. 1 unmet health care need in Ohio, among both children and low-income adults. And at a time when the dental need for adults and children is ever increasing, the impact on health centers from revenues lost through an elimination of the Adult Dental Medicaid Program would likely have the unintended consequence of dismantling Ohio’s dental safety net system for everybody - adults and children, Medicaid and the uninsured.

Separately, Runyon expressed disappointment in the elimination of General Revenue Funds (GFR) that aid and assist Ohio’s Community Health Centers in providing primary care and prevention services for the uninsured, especially at a time when the Health Center Program’s federal funding is questionable at best.

“As we do our part to reinvent our health care delivery system with specific emphasis on prevention and primary care, Ohio’s Community Health Centers are leading this transformation and making it a reality by providing access to underserved Ohioans, regardless of insurance status,” said Runyon. “Frankly, Ohio will be missing the boat if we don’t invest in primary and preventive care in our underserved areas across the state through our established system of Community Health Centers.”

“With federal funding for Community Health Centers presently on the chopping block, a simultaneous cut in state funding will have a direct, negative impact on patients and jobs at the centers,” said Runyon.
Health Centers produce a high return on investment in providing an appropriate and reliable health care home for their patients and reducing reliance on costly emergency department visits for primary care. According to the National Association of Community Health Centers, if avoidable visits to emergency rooms were redirected to Health Centers, over $18 billion in annual health care costs could be saved nationally, with nearly $1B in savings in Ohio alone.

According to Runyon, the average cost of care at a Community Health Center is less expensive at $1.67 per patient per day, compared to the U.S. average of $2.64 at all physician offices. And average payments per hospitalization were $1100 less for health center patients than traditional family practice physician patients.

OACHC represents Ohio’s 36 Community Health Centers at over 160 locations. In 2009, Community Health Centers provided care to over 475,000 Ohioans and recorded well over 1,900,000 patient visits. Collectively, Community Health Centers are the largest health care system in the nation, and are considered the best competitive program within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.