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30 Oregon Health Centers Receive $1.9 million in COVID-19 Emergency Funding

More Funding Crucial As Health Centers Face Financial Hit Due to Pandemic

Portland, OR – It was announced Tuesday that 30 Oregon Community Health Centers will receive almost $1.9 million in emergency COVID-19 funding, provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Awards range from about $51,000 to a little over $107,000 per health center.

“This funding provides some relief for Oregon’s Community Health Centers, which are on the front lines of fighting COVID-19 in communities throughout our state,” said Joan Watson-Patko, OPCA’s Executive Director. “Oregon’s health centers have pivoted to reconfigure their health care delivery models to care for patients in response to the COVID-19 crisis and, in doing so, face huge financial losses that could impact their ability to provide care. Recent analysis estimates the financial impact of COVID-19 to health centers in Oregon is over $57 million.”

For example, Neighborhood Health Center (NHC), a community health center serving Washington and Clackamas counties projects a $4 million loss in service revenue between now and the end of September. NHC was awarded just over $69,000 in Tuesday’s announcement. NHC meets the health and social needs of underserved and at-risk patients in their community.

“We are thrilled and thankful to receive this additional help so quickly,” said Jeri Weeks, CEO at NHC. “However, the amount is a drop in the bucket compared to the estimated $200,000 in COVID-19 related expenditures we’re already incurring. These expenses are not recoverable and we will quickly deplete reserves to cover operations if we don’t get significant relief.”

NHC, like many other CHCs, worry about long-term financial stability while also dealing with shortages in PPE, testing kits, and staff. On top of that, health centers are not getting reimbursed for telehealth services for Medicare patients, who are vulnerable to COVID-19.

Federal Community Health Center funding is set to expire on May 22 without action by Congress.

“Oregon Community Health Centers need immediate action from Congress so they can continue to provide care now during this pandemic and in the future,” said Watson-Patko. “As part of the largest primary care network in the United States, our health centers remain committed to keeping their doors open and to providing care to people who may otherwise not have access to services and those hardest hit during economic downturns. Health centers support the safety-net in times of emergency by providing continuity of care for patients with routine and chronic health needs. In addition, they are part of the medical community’s COVID-19 response and are screening, testing and providing care, which keeps people out of emergency rooms so that hospitals can utilize limited resources for those most in need.”

This federal funding is provided through the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2020, which was signed into law on March 6. Of the $5.8 billion included in the Congressional stimulus funding, almost $100 million was awarded to more than 1,300 health centers across the country to address screening and testing needs, acquire medical supplies, and boost telehealth capacity in response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, according to the news release. HHS is making funding available immediately.

About OPCA:
OPCA is a non-profit membership association of Oregon’s 32 community health centers, also known as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), and those who support them. The organization’s mission is to lead the transformation of primary care to achieve health equity for all.
OPCA believes all people, in Oregon and beyond, should have the chance to lead their healthiest lives and have access to equitable health care. Oregon Primary Care Association supports a network of community health centers that deliver exceptional health care to people in urban, rural and frontier communities who may otherwise not have access to services. By helping health centers apply innovative approaches to health care delivery and system challenges, OPCA is transforming primary care in Oregon and beyond. Follow us on Twitter: @OregonPCA or on Facebook.