

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 28, 2006

Dear Colleague:

Each year, the second week of August is dedicated to recognizing the tremendous service and endless contributions of Community, Migrant, Homeless and Public Housing Health Centers to our local communities and our nation.

This year, August 6-12, America's health centers will celebrate National Health Center Week 2006. Themed "Celebrating Patient Voice and Community Choice," this week will highlight the unique characteristic of Community Health Centers - a nationwide network of quality and cost-effective health care, with each local entity owned and directed by the very people it serves. Thanks to this model, people in over 4,000 communities around the nation enjoy a true sense of "ownership" over their health care system. It is this "patient democracy" that drives community empowerment and makes health centers the focal point for a whole host of activities that serve each community and its people.

Health centers provide cost-effective, high quality health care to the nation's poor and medically underserved - including the working poor, the uninsured, and many high-risk and vulnerable populations - while acting as a vital safety net in the nation's health delivery system. The seed money Congress provides to health centers empowers the communities to find partners and resources to operate the centers and recruit medical staff.

We can all be very proud of our health centers and the unique health care model that tailors services to fit the special needs and priorities of the local communities through working together with schools, businesses, churches, community organizations, foundations and State and local governments.

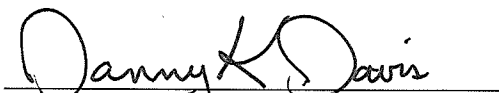
We encourage you to join in the celebration and visit a health center in your district during the Summer District Work Period to shine a public spotlight on a community-based model of health care that is opening the doors of health and giving millions of Americans in need the chance for healthy and productive lives.


For additional information regarding National Health Center Week, please log on to [www.healthcenterweek.org](http://www.healthcenterweek.org) or contact Marc Wetherhorn at the National Association of Community Health Centers at [mwetherhorn@nachc.com](mailto:mwetherhorn@nachc.com).

Sincerely,

  
Michael Bilirakis, M.C.

  
Henry Bonilla, M.C.

  
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