

Legislative **Position Paper** 2005 Regular Session

Louisiana's Health Centers are **solutions** to providing **affordable, cost effective and quality primary and preventive health care** to citizens across the state. They are a proven model of excellence and accessible to the people in the communities of greatest need. The dollars invested in health centers follow the patient to create access within the local health care system. **Louisiana's Health Centers are also vital economic forces in the communities they serve because they are community owned and operated.** In many cases, they are the largest local health care business enterprise in their community, contributing to jobs and economic growth. Louisiana's Health Centers have 39 service delivery sites that touch residents in 40 parishes throughout the state of Louisiana.

With your help, Louisiana's Health Centers can help solve primary care access problems to the uninsured and underserved everywhere in Louisiana.

Governor Kathleen Blanco and others spoke about these health centers throughout remarks at the statewide Health Summit. Louisiana's Health Centers are one in the same as the Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) national initiative to expand primary health care access to the uninsured. **President Bush** has requested a **\$304 million dollar funding increase in the 2006 budget** to serve a total of 16.6 million uninsured residents throughout the nation by expanding community health centers. However, national competition is intense and Louisiana has had a slow start.

Louisiana has an opportunity now to invest in a system that has demonstrated potential to greatly improve the way health care is delivered to the uninsured and medically underserved in this state. The **Louisiana Primary Care Association's** current five-year **statewide strategic plan** indicates that Louisiana's Health Centers plan to apply for federal grant funding to support 14 New or Expanded Access Points, raising the total number of FQHC sites to 50. Most importantly, the statewide strategic plan would provide care to **an additional 39,025 unduplicated uninsured patients.**

To accomplish Governor Blanco's challenge, calling for a minimum of one FQHC in each parish in the state of Louisiana, Louisiana's Health Centers have three requests of the Louisiana Legislature as a result of the 2005 general session:

1. A line item in the State Appropriations Bill to fund Act 1114 (the Louisiana Community Based Primary Care Initiative Fund). as an initial investment would enable existing FQHC providers to serve an additional **uninsured residents**. In meeting the challenge set forth by Governor Blanco, 72% of the parishes in the state could then possibly have a health center site for primary and preventive health services. This level of support that would also demonstrate to the Congress and the Federal government Louisiana's resolve to utilize state resources to leverage more Federal grant dollars to open more FQHC sites. Funding Act 1114 would enable existing health centers to implement services such as more medical care, dental care, mental health and substance abuse treatment, as well as pharmacy services in existing health centers. The FQHCs propose to accomplish this effort by addressing the working uninsured problems through its statewide initiative entitled the "**Universal Healthcare Access Initiative**". Additional federal resources could then be leveraged as well.
2. A line item in the amount of \$2,000,000 for capital outlay improvements would enable existing FQHC provider's revenue to assist in bricks and mortar development projects identified through the statewide strategic plan for expansions.
3. State income tax and corporate tax refund check-off box to allow Louisiana citizens and corporations the opportunity to contribute to the first ever Indigent Trust Fund (Community Based Primary Care Initiative Fund) in addressing the healthcare needs of the uninsured through the use of primary care clinics.

Louisiana Community Health Centers are **on the move, demonstrating cost efficiency in saving the state Medicaid funds, addressing health disparities and improving the coordination of care with public and rural hospitals.** We must act now to take part in the President's initiative and to support a health delivery system that is meeting the needs of the uninsured in the nation and in our state. Louisiana's Community Health Centers are an indispensable part of the **solution** to providing **cost effective, quality, primary and preventive health care** accessible to the people. Now is the time to act to help Louisiana.

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"Established in 1982, LPCA is a non-profit organization whose mission is (1) to represent the interests of federally supported and other federally qualified health centers in Louisiana and (2) to serve as an information source concerning issues of health care for poor and medically underserved populations in Louisiana."