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Wyoming Senators Save the State's Health Centers

Senators Mike Enzi and John Barrasso vote to fix a funding cliff that would have devastated Wyoming health centers.

This week the Senate passed H.R. 2, the Medicare and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 by a margin of 92 - 8. Part of this legislation provides a \$7 billion extension of funding to the nation's community health centers, also known as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). Senators Mike Enzi and John Barrasso supported this two-year funding of community health centers which will sustain 7 Wyoming FQHCs.

"We are so grateful to our Wyoming U.S. Senators for their support of this critical funding. This ensures that our centers can continue to provide primary and preventive care as part of the healthcare safety-net in Wyoming," stated Jan Cartwright, Executive Director of the Wyoming Primary Care Association.

She added, "Our focus is to increase access to healthcare statewide and to serve communities with quality and affordable care."

Wyoming FQHCs provide primary, dental and behavioral health services to underserved patients at nine sites around the state. Many of the patients are uninsured or live at or below the 200 percent poverty level. FQHCs serve as an integral part of their communities by giving patients another healthcare option instead of hospital emergency rooms.

In 2013, Wyoming FQHCs served almost 20,000 patients and saved Wyoming's health care system \$25 million.

Last month the House passed H.R. 2 by a vote of 392-37. The main focus of the bill was the bipartisan effort to provide a permanent "doc-fix", but it also provides a two year extension on the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), along with funding for Teaching Health Centers and the National Health Service Corps, which can help Wyoming recruit providers to the state. Shortly after the Senate vote the President signed it into law.

For more information on Wyoming FQHCs and the services they provide, visit www.wypca.org.

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