

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IPHCA Calls for Strengthening Funding in Underserved Communities in Response to Governor Pritzker's FY2022 Proposed Budget

SPRINGFIELD – Today, Governor JB Pritzker delivered his annual budget address virtually, introducing his proposal for Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22). IPCHA commends Governor Pritzker for prioritizing racial justice and eliminating disparities, and his commitment to protecting our state's health care and human services systems; however, we urge the Governor and the General Assembly to make a greater investment in strengthening the communities that have been hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic and long suffered from a lack of resources and investment.

We agree that the safety net must be protected. As part of the Governor's commitment to advancing equity, it is imperative not only to shield health care and human services from cuts, but to strengthen funding for this vital system of support that equips individuals, families, and communities to live healthy lives and thrive. Community health centers services are inextricably linked to social services that address all of a patient's needs, including their social determinants of health.

Health and human service programs are the backbones of robust communities and they are currently in high demand as a result of the devastating COVID-19 public health emergency which has left millions of Illinoisans facing grief, loss, illness, unemployment, isolation, and housing and food insecurity. Moreover, the pandemic has been particularly distressing for communities of color, immigrant communities, and low income communities – exacerbating the challenges they already face as a result of historic underinvestment and marginalization.

It has been said before that a budget is a moral document. As such, we urge the Governor to work with the General Assembly and stakeholders to:

- strengthen funding for health care and human services, including community health centers;
- preserve coverage and payment parity for telehealth which has proven to be a convenient and indispensable option for patients and providers;
- maximize Medicaid dollars by investing in programs that will achieve long-term savings as well as improved outcomes, and give providers flexibility to innovate and better meet the needs of their patients;
- address our state's chronic health care professional shortages by increasing funding for student loan repayment programs like the Illinois National Health Service Corps Program;
- release the \$50 million in capital dollars appropriated to community health centers by the General Assembly in FY20, to address health care deserts by building new infrastructure in our underserved communities; and
- expand reliable, affordable broadband access, along with tech literacy and devices, to bridge the digital divide and ensure universal access to telehealth regardless of income or zip code.

As a new legislative session gets underway and the state budget continues to take shape, we look forward to partnering with Governor Pritzker's Administration and the General Assembly to ensure equity is not just a goal but a reality. By



doing our part to grow access to primary health care in underserved communities, we can strengthen health outcomes for all Illinoisans.

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The Illinois Primary Health Care Association is a nonprofit trade association that serves as the voice of and champion for Illinois' 51 community health centers which serve nearly 1.5 million patients annually across almost 400 service sites in underserved areas across our state's rural, urban, and suburban communities.

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