



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Community Health Centers Commend Governor Pritzker for Prioritizing Behavioral Health and the Healthcare Workforce in Joint State of the State and FY2024 Budget Address

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – As Governor Pritzker begins his second term, the Illinois Primary Health Care Association (IPHCA) thanks him for his leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate his work to stabilize the state’s finances, providing much needed certainty and reliability to healthcare providers and other state contractors, and allowing for increased investment in vital services. We welcome the opportunity to continue partnering with his administration and the General Assembly on improving healthcare access and the wellbeing of Illinoisans.

We agree that strengthening the healthcare workforce is a top issue facing Illinois and, particularly, our member community health centers. We are grateful for the Governor including \$3 million for the Equity and Representation in Health Care Act (Public Act 102-0942) in his introduced budget. This Act, which was a collaborative effort of IPHCA and Cook County Health, creates scholarship and student loan repayment opportunities for healthcare workers from underrepresented backgrounds. It will improve healthcare providers’ ability to attract and retain top talent in medically underserved areas.

IPHCA shares the Governor’s vision of growing mental health and substance use treatment options. In recent years, tragically, our state has witnessed an historic number of fatal overdoses with the introduction of fentanyl. In 2020 alone, we lost [twice as many Illinoisans to opioid overdoses as to car accidents or homicides](#). At the same time, suicide continues to plague our young people. In fact, it has become the [third leading cause of death among Illinoisans ages 15 to 34](#), according to the Illinois Department of Public Health. Expanding access to mental health and substance use treatment is needed now more than ever.

In response to the increasingly urgent need for mental health and substance use treatment, IPHCA also agrees that increasing investment in Medicaid rates is essential. IPHCA is [proposing](#) rate increases to bring us in line with neighboring states that currently reimburse community health centers for behavioral health encounters at levels triple what Illinois pays. IPHCA also introduced [legislation](#) to expand the types of behavioral health practitioners that are eligible for reimbursement at community health centers so that we can better leverage the existing workforce. This is particularly important given the significant staffing shortages healthcare providers are experiencing after the pandemic.

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For more than fifty years, community health centers have led the way on health equity, offering access to high-quality, comprehensive primary care in marginalized communities. We look forward to working with Governor Pritzker, Administration leaders, and members of the General Assembly in the coming months to ensure that all Illinoisans can live healthy and thrive regardless of income, immigration status, health coverage, or zip code.

About the Illinois Primary Health Care Association (IPHCA)

IPHCA is a nonprofit trade association that serves as the voice of and champion for Illinois' 53 community health centers, which serve more than 1.5 million patients annually across more than 400 service sites in medically underserved rural, urban, and suburban areas.

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