



November 10, 2006

The Honorable Gordon Smith
404 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Christopher Dodd
448 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Smith and Dodd:

On behalf of health centers all across the country and the nearly 16 million Americans who rely on them for health care, I want to express our strong support for the "School-Based Health Clinic Establishment Act," legislation to improve the health of America's school children through the development and operation of school health clinics to provide comprehensive primary care health services to underinsured and at-risk children and adolescents.

As the health care home for nearly 16 million people, including nearly 5 million children, including one of every five low-income children in America, health centers have long recognized the great need for expanding access to health care services for children and adolescents. Health centers, along with hospitals, school districts, public health departments, and other organizations currently operate school-based health clinics delivering high-quality comprehensive primary, preventive, and mental health care services to approximately 2 million students in 46 states.

We strongly believe that the legislation acknowledges the value of school-based health clinics by establishing a federal competitive grant program that can be used to expand a community's existing school health clinic network or establish a new program where none exists. We commend you for provisions in the bill that would allow scope of service to be determined by the community and reflect accepted standards of practice for pediatric care. Health care providers, parents and school officials would all play a role in the tailoring of services to meet the needs of the child and adolescent populations served.

In particular, health centers are very pleased that the legislation specifically names them as eligible entities to receive school-based health clinic grants. We are also very pleased that the bill would give priority status to eligible entities with demonstrated track records for serving underserved child and adolescent populations and the ability to collaborate across education, public health, mental health, and primary care systems.

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Again, thank you for your sponsorship of the “School-Based Health Clinic Establishment Act” We stand ready to work with you to ensure its enactment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel R. Hawkins, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Daniel R. Hawkins, Jr.
Vice-President for Federal, State, and Public Affairs

Cc: John Schlitt, National Assembly on School-Based Health
Cc: Brooke Lehmann, Childworks, PLLC