

Senator Bernie Sanders Earns National Award for Community Health Care Top Award Honors Lawmaker Who Championed Investment in Primary Care and Community Health Centers

WASHINGTON, DC - The National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) presented U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) with the 2010 "Distinguished Community Health Champion" award for his leadership on behalf of those who rely on America's Community Health Centers for their health care. The top award is given only to select Members of Congress who have gone above and beyond in championing wider access to primary care and strengthening America's investment in Community Health Centers. Senator Sanders, a member of the U.S. Senate HELP (Health, Education, Labor & Pensions) Committee, has been a leading voice in Congress for expansion of the Health Centers program.



Tess Stack Kuenning with Senator Sanders at the Congressional Awards Ceremony.

"We deeply appreciate the extraordinary leadership of Senator Bernie Sanders in making sure the expansion of Community Health Centers is front and center in health care reform," said Tom Van Coverden, President and CEO of NACHC. "We look forward to continuing to work with Senator Sanders to turn our shared vision of providing every medically disenfranchised American a health center home into a reality."

The national award was presented to Senator Sanders in Washington on Feb.25th during the week when Community Health Center professionals, board members, advocates, volunteers and patients from across the country convened for the 35th annual NACHC Policy and Issues Forum in Washington, D.C. to chart a new course of Community Health Center expansion to meet the demand for care.

"As a champion in Vermont and across the country to improve access for everyone through high quality cost effective primary health care, Senator Sanders has been a critical and effective voice to expand the Community Health Center program" said Tess Stack Kuenning, executive director of Bi-State Primary Care Association. "As economic conditions remain challenging, he also understands that health centers play a key role in providing access to affordable care and stand ready to grow and meet the challenges and demands of the future."

Community Health Centers serve as the health care home for 20 million people in more than 7,500 communities nationwide. One in five Vermonters receives their primary care services at health centers. Demand for access to health care has grown, particularly as millions of people have lost their health insurance along with their jobs during the economic recession. Our Community Health Centers accept all residents, regardless of insurance status or ability to pay. The landmark health care reform efforts in Congress provide direct investment to Community Health Centers that will allow them to care for 45 million people and help keep down health costs.

With offices in Concord, NH, and Montpelier, VT, Bi-State Primary Care Association is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that works with federal, state, and regional health policy organizations and policymakers, foundations, and payers to develop strategies, policies, and programs that promote and sustain community-based, primary health care services for all.