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## Community Health Awards Presented to Vermont Congressmen Sanders, Leahy, and Welch



*"I am honored to receive the Distinguished Community Health Champion Award. Community Health Centers provide primary care, dental care, mental health services and low-cost prescription drugs to more than 22 million Americans. I'm extremely proud that the community health centers in our state provide care to one in five Vermonters. Community health centers will play a growing role when millions of people get health insurance coverage through the Affordable Care Act, and I will continue to support their efforts to expand across America." – Senator Bernie Sanders*

members, and medical directors from Vermont held meetings in the offices of Senators Leahy and Sanders, and Representative Peter Welch. Lead by Tess Stack Kuenning, executive director of Bi-State Primary Care Association, they echoed [testimony](#) Kuenning gave to the Senate Subcommittee on Primary Health and Aging earlier this year: "Alone, the expansion of public and private insurance to 30 million Americans doesn't ensure access to health care," she said. "It is access that makes coverage real." The nonprofit Community Health Centers provide access to

primary and preventive care, with targeted outreach to underserved populations. Community Health Centers accept all patients regardless of insurance coverage or ability to pay and save the health care system \$24 billion annually: \$1,263 per person, per year, by offering an open door to patients that might otherwise use more costly care, including emergency rooms.



*"I'm truly honored and humbled by Bi-State Primary Care Association's recognition. It's imperative that we support local health centers as they are critical to improving the health and well-being of our communities. I'm committed to doing my part here in the Senate and look forward to continuing to support Bi-State Primary Care Association's efforts, especially as a new member of the Congressional Community Health Center Caucus."*

WASHINGTON, DC – March 21, 2013 – Directors from [Vermont Community Health Centers](#) and [Bi-State Primary Care Association](#) joined thousands of other health center leaders from across the country today to meet with their Members of Congress and key Congressional staff on Capitol Hill. They all carried a similar message: Community Health Centers stand ready to meet the demand for primary care services. They encouraged Congress to release the funds allocated under the Affordable Care Act now to enable Community Health

Centers to expand access to primary medical, dental, and behavioral health care, as well as pharmacy services, to millions of people nationwide in the years ahead. Both the House and Senate Continuing Resolution appropriation bills included sequestration reductions to federal discretionary programs, including the Community Health Centers. However, efforts are underway to try and restore some of the Community Health Centers' funding.

The Community Health Center executive directors, board



*Rep. Peter Welch received the Distinguished Community Health Award from the National Association of Community Health Centers.*

In recognition of their past and current support of Community Health Centers, Kuenning presented Rep. Welch with the *Distinguished Community Health Defender Award*; Senator Leahy with the *Distinguished Community Health Advocate Award*; Senator Sanders with the *Distinguished Community Health Champion Award* from the National Association of Community Health Centers.

Established in 1986, Bi-State Primary Care Association is a nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c) 3 charitable organization. With offices in Bow, New Hampshire, and Montpelier, Vermont, Bi-State works with federal, state, and regional health policy organizations, foundations, and payers to develop strategies, policies, and programs that provide and support community-based primary and preventive health care services in medically underserved areas.