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## **CANDIDATES BROADLY SUPPORT ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE IN NH, BUT DIFFER ON FUNDING STREAMS**

BOW, NEW HAMPSHIRE – NH congressional and gubernatorial candidates laid out their positions on health care policy to a group of 30 executives from NH Community Health Centers, Critical Access Hospitals, Community Action and Healthcare for the Homeless programs, and Planned Parenthood of Northern New England at Bi-State Primary Care Association's October Member Meeting. As providers of primary care to more than 125,000 people, Bi-State's members are directly affected by state and federal health care policies. Republicans Charlie Bass, Frank Guinta, and Ovide Lamontagne; Democrats Anne McLane Kuster and Maggie Hassan; and Libertarians John Babiarz and Hardy Macia had 30 minutes to present their views and answer questions. Carol Shea-Porter, Democrat, and Brendan Kelly, Libertarian, were invited but unable to attend the meeting.

In the State's most recently passed biennium budget, \$4 million was cut from the budget line that supports primary care services. Responsible for keeping the doors open at 38 health center locations, from the Seacoast Region to the Great North Woods, the directors pressed candidates on how they would ensure access to primary and preventive health care, especially for those who are uninsured or have low-to-moderate incomes. The candidates' broadly supported reliable access to primary care, but had diverse views on funding sources. Gubernatorial candidates Ovide Lamontagne and Maggie Hassan stated they would seek to restore the funds cut from the State's primary care budget. John Babiarz expressed concern that without access to primary care people will delay getting care and end up in the emergency room; a much more expensive solution than preventive care.

Congressmen Charlie Bass and Frank Guinta believe Community Health Centers are a necessary part of the nationwide solution to ensure and expand access to primary care. Given the annual cost of treating diabetes and other chronic illnesses, congressional candidate Anne McLane Kuster noted that fortunately most chronic diseases respond well to preventive care, which is a hallmark of the Community Health Centers' patient-centered medical home model of care.

Summarizing the responses from the candidates, Bi-State's executive director, Tess Stack Kuenning said, "We are uniquely fortunate that each candidate for NH gubernatorial and congressional office are keenly interested and supportive of growing and strengthening the NH Community Health Centers as cost-effective quality primary health care providers assuring critical access across our state."

Bi-State Primary Care Association, serving New Hampshire and Vermont, is a nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c)(3) charitable organization established in 1986 that 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 health care services in medically underserved areas. To find a health center in New Hampshire or to learn more, visit: [www.bistatepca.org](http://www.bistatepca.org).

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