

525 Clinton Street  
Bow, NH 03304  
Voice: 603-228-2830  
Fax: 603-228-2464



61 Elm Street  
Montpelier, VT 05602  
Voice: 802-229-0002  
Fax: 802-223-2336

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Susan Noon (603) 228-2830 x 144  
Mobile: (603) 866-6020

## **Community Health Centers Seek Funding to Improve Access to Primary Care and Address the Opioid Crisis**



*(L-R): Rep. Fothergill, Sen. Bradley, Tess Stack Kuenning, Helen Taft, Kimberly Reeve*

CONCORD, NH – February 1, 2017 – More than one hundred lawmakers, business and health care leaders attended Bi-State Primary Care Association’s 2017 NH Legislative and Business Breakfast on February 1 in Concord.

Guest speakers included Sen. Jeb Bradley; Rep. John Fothergill, MD, Helen Taft, MBA, CEO of Families First Health and Support Center, Tess Stack Kuenning, CNS, MS, RN, Bi-State’s president and CEO, and Kimberly Reeve, Esq., deputy director of Policy and Information .

Ms. Reeve introduced the nonprofit Community Health Center model of care. She said that “health centers not only provide traditional primary and preventive care services, but also care management, substance use disorder treatment, behavioral health, chronic disease management, pharmaceutical services, and oral health services to 109,600 residents annually.”

Rep. Fothergill (R) District 1, a practicing physician at Indian Stream Health Center in Colebrook, described the importance of the integrated model of care at Community Health Centers, especially in the treatment of substance use disorders. Dr. Fothergill said “the opioid crisis hit the North Country and they knew that they needed to step in and do something to fill the void of services. Through medication assisted treatment, their patients receive counseling and treatment for substance use disorders, such as opiate addiction or alcoholism. Without primary care providers, NH cannot meet the demand of substance use disorders.”

Helen Taft, CEO of Families First in Portsmouth, highlighted the success of the loan repayment program in attracting and retaining primary care providers in New Hampshire. The state and federally funded program provides funding to help providers pay down medical school loans in exchange for a commitment to work in medically underserved areas. Ms. Taft said, “it is an essential tool for Community Health Centers, especially when competition is at an all-time high with the nationwide shortage of primary care providers.”

Tess Stack Kuenning, Bi-State’s president and CEO said studies have proven that Community Health Centers save money and she asked the legislators for help to address the health care needs in their communities throughout the state. Ms. Kuenning asked the legislators to restore the drastic cuts to primary care that were made in 2011, to adequately fund the State Loan Repayment program to address the primary care workforce shortage, and to support NH’s Health Protection Program.

Sen. Bradley (R) District 3 discussed the important role of Community Health Centers and the success of the NH Health Protection Program. He said that, “funding the health centers in NH to provide affordable care makes sense. NH’s Health Protection Program is working and it is vitally important, opening the doors to substance use treatment for 7,000 people.”

###

### **About Bi-State Primary Care Association**

**Bi-State Primary Care Association** is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that represents Community Health Centers and supporting organizations that provide health care to more than 300,000 people at 121 locations throughout New Hampshire and Vermont. Bi-State supports access to high quality, effective and affordable primary health care with an emphasis on reaching medically and geographically underserved populations. Bi-State Primary Care Association was founded as a 501(c) (3) charitable organization in 1986 with offices in Bow, New Hampshire and Montpelier, Vermont.