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TRIBUTE TO TESS KUENNING

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I rise today to thank Tess Kuenning, president and chief executive officer of the Bi-State Primary Care Association for her contributions to the work of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee to expand access to primary care for all Americans.

Tess Kuenning, clinically trained as an advanced practice nurse, has led Bi-State Primary Care Association for nearly 30 years. During this time, she has worked tirelessly to support community health centers in Vermont, New Hampshire, and around the country as a member of various boards, committees, and panels focused on expanding access to primary care.

Primary care is the backbone of our healthcare system. Community health centers make up a major portion of that backbone, especially for low- and moderate-income Americans. Yet Congress continues to severely underfund this critical work.

Community health centers provide affordable, quality primary medical, dental, and mental health care, as well as access to low-cost prescription drugs to over 30 million people in the United States. In Vermont, nearly one out of every three people receives their primary healthcare through a community health center across 73 sites, something that I and my fellow

Vermonters are very proud of and has happened in no small part due to Tess's efforts.

Over the past year, I worked very hard as chair of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee to increase funding for community health centers. Working day and night alongside me was Tess Kuenning. Simply put, she has done more for health centers this past year than just about anyone else in the Nation. Tess uses creativity, innovation, perseverance, and her vast network of health center contacts across the country to lift up and garner support for the community health center program. She is steadfast in her efforts to build connections and demonstrate the vast needs and even greater potential of our health centers.

To my mind, Tess Kuenning's work represents the kind of effective engagement all Americans should have with their Members of Congress. Each of us should be lucky enough to have people in our home State who understand the needs of everyday people and are willing to tell us what we need to know to provide our constituents with the help they need. I am very grateful for Tess's dedication to improving our healthcare system and the health of millions and all those who believe that healthcare is a right—not a privilege—owe her our thanks and respect.