

New Jersey Primary Care Association For Immediate Release

Press Release on the State of the State Address

Contact Katherine Grant-Davis

(609) 689-9930

Kgrantdavis@njpca.org

The New Jersey Primary Care Association (NJPCA), which represents the 19 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) in the State of New Jersey, is very appreciative of the support from Governor Corzine and his administration. FQHCs have been at the forefront of primary and preventive health care for the last 40 years. Currently these 19 centers administer over 90 sites (including school based sites, sites for migrants, sites for the homeless, sites for dental care, and comprehensive primary care sites), they provide care to an estimated 350,000 patients on an annual basis, and provide over a million patient visits a year. Governor Corzine recognizes the value of these centers and is trying to ensure that they remain financially viable.

In addition to State funded support, the centers have seen an increase in the level of federal support over the years. President Bush doubled federal financing for community health centers, which helped to create or expand 1,297 sites in medically underserved areas, including some in New Jersey. President Elect Barack Obama's nominee for Health and Human Services, (HHS) Secretary Tom Daschle, says he hopes to bring more money to community health centers than ever before. Daschle says there is "no question" whether he is supportive of the concept of a significantly expanded community health center program – he is.

The centers on a national basis, and here in New Jersey, are seeing more patients than ever before. Nationally the number of health center patients has swelled to more than 16 million patients. Many of those patients are the newly uninsured due to the economic downturn. The FQHCs are known for operational efficiency while at the same time they are effective in reducing racial and ethnic disparities in medical treatments. The National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) estimates that health centers save the health care system **\$17.6 billion a year** in avoidable emergency room visits.

In spite of this ongoing support, many centers around the country and in New Jersey find themselves in difficult financial straits due to the increasing uninsured, and belt tightening in federal programs such as, SCHIP, Medicaid, and Medicare. 75% of FQHCs in New Jersey are not making a profit. That is why it is so very important to have the support of Governor Corzine and this administration to support the work of New Jersey's FQHCs.