

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today Congresswoman Lois Capps (CA-23) and Congressman Lee Terry (NE-02) introduced legislation aimed at improving access to quality healthcare and reducing health disparities. The Nurse-Managed Health Clinic Investment Act of 2009 would support Nurse-Managed Health Clinics (NMHCs) in providing comprehensive and accessible primary healthcare and wellness services to vulnerable populations in America's medically underserved communities. The services provided by these clinics help reduce the level of health disparities experienced by these vulnerable populations while helping to train the next generation of nurse professionals. Companion legislation was introduced by Senator Daniel Inouye (D-HI) on May 20, 2009.

"Access to affordable quality healthcare, particularly in our medically underserved communities, is a major hurdle we have to overcome as part of comprehensive healthcare reform," said Congresswoman Capps, a nurse and Vice-Chair of the House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee. "Supporting the work of Nurse-Managed Health Clinics accomplishes this goal in two ways: first it increases access to vital primary healthcare and wellness services for vulnerable populations, helping to reduce the health disparities they too often experience. Second, these clinics provide invaluable learning opportunities for nursing students and other health professionals, ensuring that the next generation of healthcare professionals have "real world" training and a commitment to providing care to all populations and communities."

"Additional funding for nurse-managed health clinics is critical to the sustainability of these valuable centers," said Congressman Terry. "These nurses provide exceptional health care to those in need, most of whom live in poverty. The Family Health Care Clinic in South Omaha, Nebraska serves over 300 patients per month and has served over 33,600 Nebraskans since the clinic was established in 1993."

Nurse-Managed Health Clinics (NMHCs) are nurse-practice arrangements, managed by advanced practice nurses, that provide primary care or wellness services to underserved or vulnerable populations and are associated with a school, college, university, or department of nursing, federally qualified health center, or an independent nonprofit health or social services agency. NMHCs offer patients a full range of primary care, behavioral health and wellness services based on the nursing model, which emphasizes the protection, promotion, and optimization of health along with the prevention of illness, and the alleviation of suffering in conjunction with diagnosis and treatment. NMHCs are effective in reducing health disparities in medically underserved communities because of their locations in easily accessible and approachable facilities such as public housing developments, senior living arrangements, schools, and community centers. These locations help remove barriers preventing access to care and are instrumental in addressing and eliminating the factors contributing to health disparities.

"We applaud Representative Capps for her long-standing commitment to improving health care in the United States," said Tine Hansen-Turton, Executive Director, National Nursing Centers Consortium. "This legislation promises to increase access to health care through the

support of innovative, community-based safety net providers. Nurse-Managed Health Clinics serve a unique dual role as both primary care access points for the underserved and clinical education sites for the next generation of health care providers. With greater investment from the federal government, they have the potential to improve health care access for low-income patients, broaden the impact of upcoming health care reform proposals and create a high-quality health care workforce that will serve all patients for decades to come. In short, Nurse-Managed Health Clinics are a vital ingredient in any plan to increase the capacity of the nation's health care delivery system."

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