

Community health center funding cliff could cause more than 100,000 jobs to be lost

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If the Community Health Center Fund is not restored, millions of patients served by community health centers may lose access to crucial health care and up to 161,000 jobs could be lost in communities across the nation. That's the conclusion of an analysis produced by the Geiger Gibson/RCHN Community Health Foundation Research Collaborative at the George Washington University's Milken Institute School of Public Health (Milken Institute SPH).

The analysis is the first to look at what might happen nationwide if Congress fails to renew the Community Health Center Fund, which expired September 30th. In 2016, these health centers served 26 million people at nearly 10,000 locations.

"The current delays in funding have already caused major problems for community health centers, which are the backbone of the nation's safety net for medically underserved communities," says Leighton Ku, PhD, professor of health policy and management at Milken Institute SPH and lead author of the report. "Further delays or loss of funding could be devastating, not only to community health centers and their patients, but to workers and businesses across the country."

The analysis addresses the state-level economic and employment consequences that would occur if the Community Health Center Fund is not renewed. Here are some findings of the report:

Community health centers' ability to provide care to underserved

patients will be seriously compromised if the \$3.6 billion cut in funding is not immediately restored. Nine million patients, a third of those currently served, may lose care.

As many as 76,000 to 161,000 jobs could be lost nationwide in 2018. About two-fifths of jobs lost would be in health care, but the majority would be workers in other sectors, such as retail, construction and other fields.

State economies would be shortchanged by \$7.4 to \$15.6 billion in 2018.

Because health centers are located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories, substantial losses would occur in all areas and could be especially severe in states that did not expand Medicaid. Community health centers are not-for-profit organizations that operate at low margins; without restored funding they would be forced to downsize staff, reduce their purchasing of goods and services, curtail services or even shut down clinical sites.

"Health centers are important anchors in their communities, and serve as economic engines," said Feygele Jacobs, DrPH, President and CEO of the RCHN Community Health Foundation. "Unless policymakers act now to restore the Community Health Center Fund, we are putting our communities at risk."

The harm to patients and communities could be especially serious in areas hard hit by the recent hurricanes, like Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico. Displaced [community health](#) center [patients](#) with no [health](#) insurance in those places-and in other parts of the country-will have fewer options for [health care](#), the report warns.

The brief, "State Economic and Employment Losses If Community Health Center Funding Is Not Restored," can be accessed [here](#).

Provided by George Washington University

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