



SARASOTA COUNTY

"Dedicated to Quality Service"

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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phone: 941-861-5344 fax: 941-861-5987

March 31, 2015

The Honorable Rick Scott
Governor, State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Scott:

On behalf of the Sarasota County Commission, I am asking for your support for the successful Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) public/private partnership between Community Health Centers of North Port, Inc. (CHCNP), a not-for-profit corporation, and the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota (DOH-Sarasota). Specifically we ask that the state continue to allow DOH-Sarasota to continue as fiscal agent and medical provider for the FQHC, which will enable our successful partnership with CHCNP to remain while providing health care access for approximately 30,500 area citizens.

DOH-Sarasota has been providing primary care services to our community for more than 35 years. Our FQHC partnership with CHCNP began in 2008 in response to an increased need for these services to the county's underinsured and uninsured citizens. The FQHC now plays a key role in providing primary care services to this population. The profile of our FQHC's services is as follows:

- 30,500 Sarasota County citizens, including approximately 13,700 children and more than 1,000 pregnant women, received their primary care through this program
- 37.3% of these patients were uninsured, including adults below 138% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) who did not qualify for or could not afford health insurance
- 55.2% were covered by Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program
- 61.8% had family incomes at 100% of the FPL or less; the FPL for a family of four in 2014 was \$23,850
- 15.2% had family incomes of more than 100% of FPL but less than 200% of FPL (often called "working poor")
- More than 1,100 individuals reported that they were homeless

Our FQHC provides primary health care services under board certified providers, which include: Adult health; Pediatrics; Women's health; Obstetrics/gynecology; Dental; Pharmacy; Lab; Social Services; Chronic disease case management; Behavioral health (outpatient mental health and substance abuse services); and counselors who help uninsured individuals and families find affordable health care.

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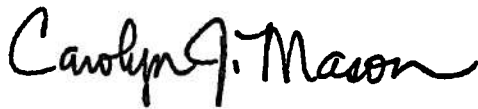
The FQHC partnership between DOH-Sarasota and the CHCNP serves as the main safety-net for our citizens who, otherwise, would be unable to secure health care and related services. It is increasingly difficult for those on Medicare or Medicaid to find physicians willing to accept them as patients. Although it is likely that they will see an increase in emergency room visits for non-emergency illnesses, Sarasota Memorial Hospital has indicated they have no interest in assuming the role of our FQHC. Other private non-profit medical providers have indicated they do not have the capacity to absorb our large number of clients and even refer their most severe or complex cases to our FQHC.

The loss of this partnership would be significant to many of the most vulnerable citizens in our community. The funding model that sustains this FQHC does not impact state funding so we are perplexed as to why there would be such a strong desire to eliminate a needed medical service that is having a significant positive impact on the health of our citizens.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to ask.

Thank you for your leadership and service to our state.

Sincerely,



(signed in her absence to avoid delay)

Carolyn J. Mason
Chair

c: Sarasota County Commission
Sarasota County Legislative Delegation
Thomas A. Harmer, County Administrator
Lee Ann Lowery, Assistant County Administrator
Robert R. Lewis, Director, Community/Intergovernmental Relations