

Background

The state's fiscal decline has had a lasting impact on communities across the Commonwealth. Low-income cities and towns — perhaps the hardest hit by the economic downturn — are struggling as the opportunities for employment are few and families in crisis are many. Nowhere are the effects more apparent than at Massachusetts' community health centers. Health centers already provide primary and preventive care to one out of every 9 residents, yet inquiries and appointment requests are on the rise.

Recognition of their role as both providers of care and economic engines has led to recent funding for federally-funded health centers under the American Recovery and Reinvestment and Patient Protection and Affordable Care Acts. These investments have allowed health centers to hire new doctors; begin long-planned and needed renovation projects and technology upgrades; extend their hours of care; and create and retain jobs for community residents.

Impact

In addition to employing nearly 10,000 individuals, health centers also provide critical entry level jobs and training and career building opportunities right in the communities they serve. When looking at their overall economic impact on the state's economy, Massachusetts community health centers stimulated \$1.24 billion in total output, generated \$732 million in household income and supported more than 14,000 jobs in 2009. Since federal stimulus funding was released in the spring of 2009, Massachusetts health centers have created 220 positions and health access for more than 92,700 state residents.

Issue

Not all Massachusetts community health centers are eligible for federal funding and need state investments to grow their cost-effective model of care to serve more residents and stimulate local economies.

Solution

The Commonwealth has long seen the benefits of investing in all community health centers to build economic strength from the grassroots up. Continued state investment in health centers that reinforces their public health and economic stimulus roles would directly benefit the state's hardest hit cities and towns, stabilizing neighborhoods through increased economic activity and improving access to critical health services for the uninsured.