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## Hawai'i Primary Care Association

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS:  
Hawai'i's Essential Health Care Provider

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**Community Health Centers (CHCs) are a vital part of Hawai'i's health care system. They provide care for 100,000 people who otherwise would not get services at all or would end up in over-burdened emergency rooms (ERs), suffering from preventable conditions that end up requiring hospitalization.**

**Who:** CHCs are the safety net provider for people who, for a variety of reasons, are not cared for by the private healthcare system. CHCs in Hawaii take care of:

- **30,000 uninsured residents.**
- **70,500 people living in poverty.**
- **10,700 homeless individuals.**
- **38,500 low-income Medicaid enrollees.**
- **7,200 elderly Medicare beneficiaries.**
- **27,600 Native Hawaiians at high risk for chronic conditions and in need of culturally compatible care.**
- **14,400 people who need language interpreters.**

**What:** CHCs provide primary medical, dental, and mental health services for all age groups. Equally important, CHCs help patients: get the economic and social assistance they need in order to get well; manage their care; provide health education; and offer interpreters and transportation.

**Where:** CHCs operate only where there are a lot of people not getting the care they need. These are areas without enough doctors, or communities where there are high rates of poverty, homelessness, and cultural differences.

**Why they're important:** CHCs are essential to Hawai'i for several reasons:

- A growing number of people — 100,000 in 2006 — rely on them for all their health care needs. As noted above, these are Hawai'i's most vulnerable residents whose challenges are not accommodated by private doctors.
- If CHCs were not there to provide cost-effective preventive care, ERs and Hospitals, already struggling with uncompensated costs and high demands, would be burdened to the point of collapse. ERs and Hospitals were never intended to take on this kind of safety net role.
- CHCs offer access to high quality care for the whole community. As community-based nonprofit corporations, meeting strict federal guidelines for quality of care, they offer stable primary care services in areas where the supply of private doctors doesn't meet population needs.

**Economic Benefits:** CHCs are also essential to the economic health of their communities. In 2006, Hawai'i's CHCs contributed \$84 million to the State's economy and employed 1,044 people. Further, their presence produced a ripple effect, stimulating \$168 million in economic activity and supporting 1,768 jobs. CHCs improve the health of both the people and the economies in their communities.

*The Hawai'i Primary Care Association (HPCA) is a nonprofit organization, funded largely by the Bureau of Primary Health Care. Our mission is to strengthen systems of care in Hawaii for communities in need. Among the activities of the HPCA are training, technical assistance, and peer networking; marketplace analysis and statewide strategic health planning; the Hawai'i Immigrant Health Initiative; Hawai'i Covering Kids; community development; telehealth and health care technology; and community health worker training. For more information, contact:*

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