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## **North Carolina Community Health Center Association Supports Covering the Uninsured Working Poor via the NC Healthcare for Working Families Program**

The [NC Healthcare for Working Families Program, HB 655](#), is a North Carolina specific approach to covering more people who are uninsured. This bill, introduced by Representatives Lambeth, Murphy, Dobson, and White provides access to insurance coverage – with a focus on primary and preventive care – to working adults. NCCHCA believes this bill should advance through the legislative process.

### **The NC Healthcare for Working Families Program**

- Offers comprehensive health insurance coverage to working people, ages 18-64, with incomes below 133% of the federal poverty guidelines (or \$16,612 annually)
- Encourages enrollees to participate in preventive care and wellness programs
- Will not cost the state anything, as it will receive funding through (a) federal match, (b) participant contributions, and (c) state assessments, including hospital assessment
- Creates a North Carolina Rural Access to Healthcare Grant Program

### **A Pragmatic Approach, But Concerns Remain**

The NC Community Health Center Association believes this bill is a pragmatic approach to covering more uninsured North Carolinians. The focus of the program should be to advance the health of low-income adults through access to health care and supportive social and educational programs. North Carolina's groundbreaking 1115 Medicaid waiver incorporates these concepts and develops initiatives to facilitate these connections. With an eye to economic uplift of working families, flexibility in the work requirements to allow for job training, education, and self-employment will go a long way towards improvements in health and the overall economic well being of our citizenry. In 2017, Community Health Centers saw approximately 236,000 uninsured patients statewide, and this bill could increase health insurance coverage for those patients. NCCHCA cautions that such a bill should ensure a consumer accessible reporting system that accommodates the needs of North Carolina's working families. Because work reporting and premium contribution requirements have created barriers to working families in other states, NCCHCA hopes the legislature will develop a plan that is consistent with our leadership and innovation in Medicaid reform and facilitate access to coverage and care.

Included in HB 655 is the North Carolina Rural Access to Healthcare Grant Program which reinvests resources towards addressing the critical health care access needs of rural North Carolina. We applaud this approach and welcome further opportunities to extend support for health care providers practicing in rural areas through supportive programs aimed at developing a pipeline of providers from the rural and underserved areas of the state. Advancing Teaching Health Centers and other practice based primary care residency programs with demonstrated success in training and retaining rural providers should be prioritized in this approach.

NCCHCA is the HRSA funded state Primary Care Association (PCA). The 41 non-profit, consumer-governed Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and FQHC look-alikes we represent provide integrated medical, dental, pharmacy, behavioral health, and enabling services to over one-half million patients in North Carolina.