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CHAIRMAN
CONGRESSIONAL WESTERN CAUCUS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

March 23, 2023

Dear Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member DeLauro:

I am requesting funding for Family Health Centers Okanogan County Dental Expansion Project in fiscal year 2024. The entity to receive funding for this project is Family Health Centers, located at 1003 Koala Avenue, Omak, WA 98841.

This project will not only add general dentistry access to a dire unmet need, but it will also increase access to specialty dental services that currently patients forgo because of travel distances one and a half to two hours away. Too often this care is not completed or completely forgone because of lack of public transportation or people being place bound by poverty factors. Family Health Centers (FHC) is a nonprofit Federally Qualified Health Center that offers primary and preventive health care for residents of Okanogan County and North Douglas County without regard to their ability to pay for care. Family Health Centers has medical services in six locations and dental services in four locations plus a mobile dental clinic. These communities are extremely rural and economically challenged.

One of the biggest care needs in the Okanogan region is for dental care and support. While FHC prioritizes care for children and urgent dental health needs, there is a waiting list of hundreds of patients at each clinic location that can't currently be seen. Even when fully staffed, routine adult dental care is rarely able to be provided consistently.

To solve this problem, FHC will co-locate a new dental clinic with our largest medical clinic in Omak. This will facilitate and augment services provided in small towns to the north and south of Omak. This clinic will allow FHC to add 20 new dental operatories and recruit four general dentists. When built, the project will allow FHC to double the number of patients able to get dental care and support, bringing the total number of annual patient visits to approximately 20,000.

The project is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds because residents of Okanogan County face many challenges due to the extremely rural nature of the County and the poverty levels. The County is among the state's poorest with more than 20% of the population living below the poverty level. The County is the largest in Washington State and larger in size than three states.

This project can't be completed without support from the federal government. Family Health Centers has been a critical community resource during the COVID-19 pandemic and operating at peak levels to keep our community safe. The pandemic, staffing costs and the inflationary environment have created a clear need for federal investments to be able to finish this project.

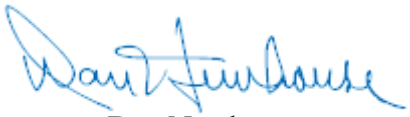
FHC has obtained $2.5 million in state funding for this project and will use local revenues in combination with the federal appropriations funding to complete the project.

This project represents a sustainable, cost-effective community health investment that will create needed care options for Okanogan County residents dealing with dental health needs. Federal funding will allow for this project to be completed and bring this necessary medical service to residents in Okanogan County.

Federal funding is needed to complete the construction of this project to combine with state and local resources already secured for the project.

The project has a Federal nexus because the funding provided is for purposes authorized by Section 306 of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act, 7 U.S. Code section 1926(a). I certify that I have no financial interest in this project, and neither does anyone in my immediate family.

Sincerely,



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress