

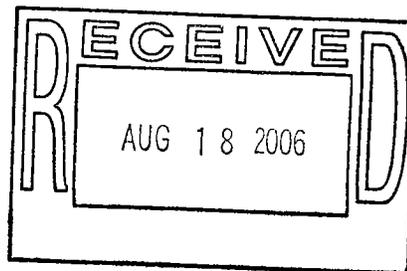


RIVER HILLS

C O M M U N I T Y H E A L T H C E N T E R

August 18, 2006

Randall L. Johnson, Chair
Citizens' Health Care Working Group
7201 Wisconsin Avenue Suite 575
Bethesda, MD 20814



Dear Mr. Johnson,

Recently, the Citizens' Health Care Working Group released its interim recommendations for how to make quality health care more accessible and affordable to every American.

While I support the majority of the Working Group's interim recommendations, I am writing to express my concern with the recommendation to *expand and modify the Federally Qualified Health Center concept to accommodate other community-based health centers and practices serving vulnerable populations.*

The philosophy of the FQHC program is to provide affordable, quality, patient-directed health care to the uninsured and underserved. One of the ways this is accomplished is through the requirement that each FQHC be governed by a patient-dominated Board of Directors. The Working Group's recommendation would effectively take the community out of the process by removing or significantly diminishing the community board requirement. This would seriously impact the integrity of the FQHC program, which has a long history as one of the most successful, cost-effective federal programs.

I strongly encourage you to eliminate this recommendation. Other providers who want federal recognition and support, but do not wish to meet current FQHC requirements, should seek independent legislative recognition – making their justification in a manner similar to FQHCs.

Sincerely,

Rick Johnson, CEO
River Hills Community Health Center

CC: Tori Squires, Community Development Director
Iowa/Nebraska Primary Care Association