

Health Centers in Plainfield, Richford and Springfield Awarded \$4.3 Million

Community health centers at Springfield, Plainfield and Richford were awarded \$4.3 million in the first round of grants under a new health care law, the Vermont congressional delegation announced today.

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) fought for \$11 billion in The Affordable Care Act to expand health centers and double to 40 million the number of patients served nationwide over the next five years.

"A week after breaking ground on the new health center in Burlington, it is extremely exciting to see expansion projects approved for Springfield, Richford and Plainfield," Sanders said. "This will create jobs in the short term, but most importantly it will improve access to affordable primary health care, dental care and low-cost prescription drugs."

Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) said, "This is another example of how health care reform will improve access to care for Vermonters, particularly those who live in rural areas. Community health centers are an integral part of the health care network in Vermont and these funds will allow their expanded facilities to care for more patients,"

Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) said, "Our community health centers provide top-rate affordable health care to thousands of Vermonters. This funding makes critical resources available to three pioneering Vermont health centers in their effort to expand access to high quality primary and preventive care in their communities. This is a double win – creating jobs and expanding health access to rural Vermonters."

Springfield Medical Care Systems will receive \$2.5 million for a new outpatient facility in an old mill building. The Health Center in Plainfield will receive \$988,700 to construct a facility for behavioral health services that also will house cardiac rehabilitation, exercise and health-promotion services and a garage for a dental van. The Richford Health Center will receive \$850,000 for a new building at a satellite center in Enosburg Falls.

Altogether, the \$4.3 million for Vermont will be used to address pressing construction and renovation needs and expand access to quality, affordable health care. The projects are expected to create 27 construction-related and health center jobs.

Nationwide, Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced awards of \$727 million to 143 community health centers.

The new funding under the health care law is in addition to a \$2 billion nationwide investment sponsored by Sanders in last year's economic stimulus package. Vermont has received \$21 million for health centers through the stimulus bill, including \$10.9 million to rebuild the Community Health Center of Burlington. Ground was broken Sept. 27 on that stimulus-funded expansion. Centers in Rutland, Bradford, Morrisville, and St. Johnsbury also have seen significant boosts recently.

Vermont has eight community health centers with 41 satellite offices providing primary health care to more than 108,000 patients regardless of their ability to pay.