

Testimony Submitted by Isi Ikharebha Green
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Good Morning Senators! My name is Isi Ikharebha Green and I am the Executive Director of the Physicians CareConnection.

Physicians and other experts working together to optimize the health of those most vulnerable in our community is the mission of Physicians CareConnection. Established over 25 years ago, by the Columbus Medical Association to enable health care professionals and volunteers to provide quality healthcare for those most in need in our community; PCC has achieved successful healthcare outcomes for high risk populations through our unique model of patient centered care coordination.

PCC is the umbrella organization of the Physicians Free Clinic, The Voluntary Care Network, The Eye Health Initiative, Preventative Colorectal Cancer Screening Initiative, Dentist CareConnection, StepOne for a Healthy Pregnancy, and The Eviction Avoidance Pilot. Through a network of 1,100 health care professionals (primary care physicians, subspecialists, dentists, and nurses) and 13 participating hospitals, PCC acts as a connector between people who are vulnerable and medical services; medical homes (primary care), specialty, diagnostic, hospital, prenatal, postpartum, and social services.

Central Ohio is rich with healthcare resources; however, resources can be disconnected, limit access, lack coordination, lack capacity, and may not be affordable. While healthcare coverage is critical, coverage does not equal access. Access to medical care is necessary, but it is not sufficient. Using our unique model of patient centered care coordination; PCC has achieved successful healthcare outcomes for high risk hard to reach populations in Franklin County. Our model supports medical professionals operating at the top of their licenses to focus on the treatment and diagnosing of disease. PCC acts as an extension of the medical team, assessing and addressing social, behavioral and 'place - based' risk factors that negatively impact health care outcomes. Through community partnerships, PCC bridges gaps in care and ensures responsive healthcare for those most vulnerable in our community.

As a recipient of dollars through the Uninsured Care Fund from the state budget you have all of our statistical data on numbers of patients we see, our outcomes, the return on investment of our donations with volunteer service, etc. The numbers are important, and as anyone who knows me will attest, I believe quality data is essential for us to manage our organization. Having said that, there are real people behind this data and I wanted to touch on just a few examples to help give you an additional sense of the impact of the support that you provide with State finances.

In the first part of 2016, we had a Hispanic male show up to our free clinic through our walk in

line. He was complaining of pain in his chest, neck, and face. He had been to the emergency room several times to address this pain. He was told that it was related to dental problems that he was having. He did not have insurance, so he was referred to our clinic. During his visit with our volunteer primary doctor, it was recommended that he be scheduled for a diagnostic test. Our nurse was able to schedule him a test at a nearby hospital. The results showed that he had Stage 4 lung cancer. Through our network of volunteer specialists, our nurse was able to identify an oncology specialist for him. Within a week the appointment was scheduled and he began receiving treatment. Before he went to his appointment and after receiving the news of his stage 4 cancer, our nurse also prayed with him. He endured a year of chemotherapy. At the beginning of this month (December), he returned to our clinic. He asked to see our nurse Katie and let her know that his cancer was in remission and he wanted to thank her for everything that she had done for him. To top it off, he wanted a picture with the woman who had saved his life!

Access to dental care continues to be an unmet health care need in our community. In addition to poor health and personal pain related to the need for dental care, we have heard stories about how bad teeth can lead to broken dreams, especially for those looking for a job. A very practical reality is that having bad teeth may often translate into poor employment prospects.

Through collaboration with the Columbus Dental Society (CDS), Central Ohio Hospital Council, Columbus Neighborhood Centers, and Columbus Public Health, we have been able to build and organize a volunteer dental network to provide charitable services to low-income, uninsured, and underinsured residents in Franklin County.

In 2012, we began our free dental clinical, providing single tooth extractions on the second and fourth Monday of each month. In 2014, we added restorative services which include teeth cleanings and fillings. At the end of 2015, in partnership with Affordable Dentures, we began providing dentures to a small number of clients. With an increase in funding from the state we will be able to help more people receive dentures and other preventative dental services. To date we have served 1,841 people through our dental initiative. The value of the care given totals \$611,051; however, the true economic value of this care is to the community as we have kept 1,841 people from seeking this care in the Emergency room!

As an organization that works with people who are vulnerable, we continue to applaud our nation's thrust to expand healthcare coverage. To help our patient's transition into the marketplace, we have been designated as a Certification Application Counselor site and can assist residents with enrollment into the marketplace.

Last year, one of the patients that we have been coordinating services for let us know she had lost her Medicaid coverage. She is not employed, but her husband receives Social Security benefits and within the last two months began receiving early retirement benefits. Their monthly income went from \$1,700 to \$2,100. This patient has a number of chronic health care problems. Her prescription medication cost without insurance is over \$2,000.00/month. She had continued going to the doctor's office for her visits and accrued a large bill. Our care coordinator was able to help her apply for financial assistance through the hospital to take care

of those bills. A friend of hers was able to bring her to our office and three hours later, after educating her about her options in the marketplace and how it all works, our care coordinators were able to find her a plan with a monthly premium of \$34. With this plan, she only pays \$5 for her primary care visits and \$5 for each her medications. One of the medications that she has to take for blood clots cost over \$400/month! We were also able to provide her friend with a \$10 gas card, knowing the struggle it took for our patient to find someone to transport her.

These examples of care coordination continue to be our experience. It is very resource intensive, but very necessary and ultimately, very cost effective.

The health care landscape in our country is complicated. The demographics of the vulnerable population continue to change dramatically. Coupled with the challenges associated with the social determinants of health, there are a substantial number of our residents that will continue to need help when they are sick.

We continue to see the value of work through our outcomes. After one year of participating in a coordinated system of care, 57% of our patients report increased ease of access to care, 67% realize improved physical and mental health, and 74% reported NO visits to the Emergency Room. Our “no show rates” for office visits remain below 6%. For every \$1 that we receive in funding, we can coordinate \$5 in medical care, a community return on investment of 500%. In 2018, we served 5,901 people. We scheduled over 7,800 medical appointments. We connect 268 at risk families to food pantry’s; kept 22 families from being evicted and housed 9 families.

There are still many unanswered questions about the future of healthcare coverage for our country. We must continue to be both diligent and patient, and all the while organizations such as ours will continue to be a vital part of our health care system, not only providing access to care for those who are vulnerable, but coordinating care for people who will continue to fall through the cracks.

The funding that we receive through the State is critical to providing these services and we would greatly appreciate the increase to 3 million dollars in the budget to be a partner with you in meeting the needs of our community.