

## **Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA-34) honored by the National Association of Community Health Centers**

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**March 26, 2009 Washington, D.C.** – For the fifth time, the National Association of Community Health Centers presented Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA-34) with its Distinguished Community Health Defender Award for her "commitment to strengthen and preserve access to quality health care for America's medically underserved."



From her seat on the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Subcommittee of Appropriations, the congresswoman advocates on behalf of the federal funding needs of the community clinics and health centers. The independent not-for-profit providers of comprehensive primary health care services serve the working poor, the uninsured, medically high-risk and vulnerable populations, regardless of a person's ability to pay.

Pictured in the photo, the congresswoman (shown holding the award) along with Carl Coan, President & CEO of the Eisner Pediatric & Family Medical Center in Downtown in the 34<sup>th</sup> District, stands with other members of the Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County.

The award presentation followed the congresswoman's remarks to members of the California Primary Care Association. The congresswoman mentioned the importance of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act passed by Congress to assist community health centers endure the economic downturn. Under the federal Recovery measure, every community health center in the country is eligible for additional federal funds this year. In the 34<sup>th</sup> District, the following centers will receive additional funding under the measure: Family Health Care Centers of Greater LA; Alta Med Health Services Corporation; Chinatown Service Center; Clinica Monseñor Oscar A. Romero; Eisner Pediatric & Family Medical Center; Family Health Care Centers of Greater Los Angeles; and Los Angeles Christian Health Centers.

### **Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard's full remarks:**

"I am so pleased to be able to join you today during your annual Community Health Centers Policy Forum, and I welcome you to Washington, D.C.

For those of you from around the state that I do not know, it is a pleasure to have the chance to meet you as members of the California Primary Care Association. Finally, as some of you may know, one of my major efforts this year is to ensure that public health and prevention have a significant role in any health care legislation. I believe community health centers offer a paradigm of care on prevention and health promotion that should serve as a standard for whatever models evolve out of our health reform efforts.

That is why your being here in Washington DC is so important. Your stories and the value of your expertise along with the high quality of the care you provide to the most underserved populations in our country, provide me and my colleagues with a reality check of what is really happening on the frontlines of health care and public health. And equally as important, you give us inspiration for the fight ahead and the critical health reform decisions we will ultimately make for those who depend on us most.

I know it is no secret to my Los Angeles Clinic friends that I am a huge fan of Community Health Centers. The work you do in the trenches day in and day out is essential to providing a critical safety net for the uninsured and underinsured in this country. And I am humbled by your dedication and commitment to the medically underserved in our communities.

During my years in Congress, and in particular my tenure on the Labor–HHS–Education Appropriations Subcommittee, it has been my privilege to work closely with the National Association of Community Health Centers, and with the Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County, to increase federal funding levels for our safety net of community health centers.

The good news is that because of your outstanding work, health clinics have enjoyed true bipartisan support in the last eight years – and as a result have received badly needed increases in the Community Health Centers federal budget. But as you know these are difficult times especially for health centers as more people lose their homes, their jobs and their healthcare. Therefore the challenge before us now is to make sure your safety net of services becomes stronger and more far reaching.

While the \$2 billion in one-time funding for health centers contained in the Economic Recovery Act was an essential investment in this effort, unfortunately it does not solve the lack of primary care access in our country. As Congress is beginning work on health care reform, I believe Community Health Centers represent an unparalleled model of primary care in America that is rarely matched even in the private sector.

I have seen this model first hand in the high quality coordinated care that is a daily occurrence in the community clinics in my 34th District.

I have been inspired by the commitment of the clinic staff to provide a culturally sensitive health care environment. And I have been very impressed with their innovative efforts to increase services and expand access to health care.

For example, this spring, JWCH will combine multiple social and health services to serve our homeless on Skid Row in a state-of-the-art facility. Eisner Pediatric and Family Medical Center has a midwifery-run women's health service that features a centering pregnancy model of prenatal care, and of course there is Alta Med which has a long standing commitment to improving the health of our seniors through their adult day health care centers. These are just three examples of the high quality care provided by clinics in my district. And I know this room is full of other excellent examples.

The expertise of my clinics is so valuable to me as a legislator that I have an annual meeting with the community health centers in my district to better understand their challenges and become better informed, from their experiences, on how to improve health care in this country. I have learned so much from these meetings. For that reason I would encourage you to invite your Members of Congress to begin such an annual tradition.