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Rosa DeLauro Brings Officials, Providers and Parents to CHC for a Conversation on Expanding Access to Opioid Treatment

MIDDLETOWN, Conn., April 12, 2016: U.S. Rep Rosa DeLauro spoke passionately about the essential need for more access to opioid treatment during a community conversation Monday, April 11 at the Community Health Center, Inc. (CHC).

Joined by local providers, government officials, and parents whose children suffered addiction, DeLauro spoke about the need for coordinated action. "It requires a response from all levels of government." She mentioned a successful methadone program for addicted inmates of a state correctional facility but cautioned that it was not enough. "When inmates get out, where do they go? They have no job, no housing, and they find themselves back on the street. The dots have to be connected."

DeLauro has introduced a bill, the Access to Substance Abuse Treatment Act, to provide \$1 billion to support community clinics and expand access to treatment for individuals with a history of substance abuse.

Marwan Haddad, MD, director of special populations at CHC, spoke about the agency's success in expanding access to medication assisted treatment for addiction by training primary care providers. A new grant to CHC will allow more access to treatment by increasing behavioral health support for addicts that, in turn, will allow providers to treat more patients.

Daren Anderson, MD, director of CHC's Weitzman Institute mentioned the success of Project ECHO, regular teleconferences that allow primary care providers to interact with specialist to improve their care for patients. Physicians in 100 locations across 20 states are now involved in Project ECHO Pain sessions. "A big part of the solution for the opioid epidemic is education and training that helps primary care providers learn new approaches to care and gives them the tools and techniques they need to help manage pain."

To place a human face on the opioid epidemic, parents Anne Kaiser and Michelle Sember spoke movingly of the pain and chaos drug abuse meant for their children who suffered from addiction. Kaiser said her daughter knows methadone saved her life and yet some doctors and healthcare providers reject medication assisted treatment out of the mistaken believe that "a drug is a drug."

"We thank Rosa for hosting this important community conversation," commented Mark Masselli, CHC President and CEO. "The opioid epidemic has caused unimaginable loss and grief for far too many families. We join Rosa in advocating for the funding and solutions necessary to bring treatment to those in desperate need."

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About Community Health Center, Inc.

Since 1972, Community Health Center, Inc. has been one of the leading healthcare providers in the state of Connecticut, building a world-class primary healthcare system committed to caring for uninsured and underserved populations. CHC is focused on improving health outcomes for its more than 130,000 patients as well as building healthy communities. Recognized as both a Level 3 Patient-Centered Medical Home by the National Committee for Quality Assurance and a Primary Care Medical Home by The Joint Commission, CHC delivers service in more than 200 locations statewide, offering primary care in medical, dental and behavioral health services. For more information, visit www.chc1.com.