Acknowledgements
Good morning. I want to thank Governor Christie for his commitment to New Jersey’s uninsured and underinsured. By providing a record $50 million in this year’s budget to New Jersey’s federally qualified health centers—he is ensuring more New Jerseyans are receiving the health care they need. Since he became Governor he has increased funding to these centers $10M despite difficult budgets. I also want to recognize Kathy Grant Davis, President & CEO of the New Jersey Primary Care Association—she is a great advocate for New Jersey’s health centers. Additionally, I want to thank Dr. & Mrs. Zufall and CEO Eva Turbiner for their dedication to ensuring access to health care in this community.

Community Health Centers
Community health centers statewide are a critically important “medical home” for those with no other source of care. Health Centers provide healthcare services for our state’s medically underserved. Nearly half (47%) of the more than 450,000 patients served at health centers are uninsured.

As Commissioner, I’ve visited many health centers (CHEMED in Lakewood; Jewish Renaissance Medical Center in Perth Amboy; Henry J. Austin in Trenton; Monmouth Family Health Center in Long Brach, AtlantiCare in Atlantic City) and I am always impressed with the comprehensive nature of services provided at these centers. In rural areas as well as urban areas, community health centers provide well baby care and immunizations to prevent childhood diseases like whooping cough & measles. They provide screenings for blood pressure, cancer, cholesterol and HIV. Many provide dental care and operate mobile vans for underserved populations. Some are located in schools and others specialize in serving the homeless and mentally ill. And most have extended evening and weekend hours and some have pharmacies on-site.

Zufall Health Center
Zufall has a great history of serving their community with a wide range of health services. The Department of Health is proud to have supported their expansion over the years so they can bring health care to more residents. They currently have 4 sites and a mobile van that travels to churches, soup kitchens and homeless shelters so they can bring health care to hard to reach populations. Beyond just primary care—they also provide dental and mental health care and substance abuse services. Their facility in Morristown focuses on the homeless population and residents of public housing. They are truly caring for our most vulnerable residents.

Funding
Health Centers need and deserve governmental support—these centers are a great way to bolster overall population health, but they also save the state money in the long run by addressing preventable illness and treating chronic disease. Health Centers deliver primary and preventive care in the most effective setting. Recent studies have
demonstrated that health centers reduce Emergency Department use by Medicaid patients and increase health education for uninsured patients and ensure appropriate care for those with diabetes. In our state, a pilot to reduce overuse of emergency care at hospitals by collaborating with community health center has shown promising results. At the pilot’s conclusion Emergency Department visits for primary care needs had declined 22% overall and inappropriate use decreased 47% among Medicaid patients in particular. Collaboration to increase access to primary care and reduce overuse of EDs also could explain a decline in overall charity care delivered in hospitals last year. We hope this reduction reflects our focus on promoting primary preventive care to keep residents healthy.

In recognition of the comprehensive care they deliver—the Governor has invested in our community health centers a record $50M in the current state budget to reimburse health centers for the medical care they provide to the uninsured. In addition, the state supports health centers with nearly $9M in grants for an array of services including immunizations, cancer screening, HIV counseling, testing and treatment and management of diseases like diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

**Closing**
This funding increase reflects Governor Christie’s commitment to our most vulnerable residents and recognizes the important role our health centers play in the health of their community. I thank the Governor for his support of the health care safety net in our state.