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Inglis gets grass-roots view of health care

By [Dudley Brown](#)

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U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis

U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis continued his tour across the 4th Congressional District Wednesday to learn about health care and to hear ideas from health care administrators and doctors.

He made stops at Spartanburg Regional Medical Center and ReGenesis Community Health Center.

"There are some very knowledgeable people who can help with this," Inglis said of crafting future health care legislation.

While at ReGenesis, a nonprofit primary care facility, he asked how the center attracted doctors while competing with larger hospitals, how illegal immigrants are treated and how health care could change if community health centers were located alongside or closer to major hospitals.

"You can tell by the quality of his questions that he's someone who does his homework," said George Newby, executive director of ReGenesis.

The idea that really excited Inglis was having community health centers closer to hospitals to assist with emergency room diversion.

That could make emergency rooms less crowded and lower costs for patients by sending them to the centers.

"Community health centers co-locating with hospitals to provide the low-intensity services that can be moved out of the emergency room is one of the biggest opportunities I see," Inglis said.

Newby said he also likes the idea of having community health centers near hospitals because ReGenesis treats all patients, but people sometimes view it only as a neighborhood facility.

Inglis received a tour of the center and met a mental health counselor. Forty percent of the center's patients are children, and 35 percent to 38 percent of its patients don't have insurance. Patients without insurance pay based on their incomes.

ReGenesis has expanded to Cherokee County and would like to open a facility in Union County.

"With unemployment what it is in Union County, ReGenesis needs to be there," Newby said.

ReGenesis Community Health Center opened five years ago. It is one of 19 federally qualified community health centers in the state.

Inglis began his tour three weeks ago to get a better understanding of how health care is delivered and paid for in the 4th District and to develop ideas for patient-centered care.

Inglis will spend today at Greenville Memorial Hospital and dedicate time to observing the hospital's emergency department tonight.

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