

Statement of the Honorable James M. Jeffords  
Public Health Subcommittee Hearing on  
Safety Net Providers  
March 22, 2001

I would like to thank Senator Frist for holding this hearing on our Nation's safety net programs.

In spite of many obstacles, the doctors, nurses, hospitals, and clinics involved in these programs continue to be committed to delivering high-quality, cost-effective health care to low-income and vulnerable patients.

Today we will hear about several essential safety net programs funded by the federal government. There are, however, also other important safety net providers that are in private or not-for-profit health care systems. For example, in Vermont, we have two strong Community Health Center programs, one academic medical center, and the Coalition of Clinics for the Uninsured. Every day, these dedicated providers each play a vital role in providing safety net care for Vermonters.

I know that this room today is full of safety net providers. We respect your commitment to patient care and I am committed to supporting your efforts.

That is why I am so pleased to be here today to hear updates on the Consolidated Health Centers and the National Health Service Corps programs today. I am also interested to hear your ideas on the Community Access Program.

We need to do more to increase access to health care and ensure that the Safety Net already in place becomes stronger and more reliable. We simply cannot afford to let it unravel.