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For Immediate Release

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Kennedy's Pursuit: Healthcare Begins, Ends at Columbia Point

DORCHESTER, MA – Just a few miles from where mourners spent the day paying their last respects to Sen. Edward “Ted” M. Kennedy sits a non-descript brick building on Mount Vernon Street where the uninsured have been coming for decades for affordable medical and dental services.

The building is home to the Geiger-Gibson Community Health Center, formerly the Columbia Point Health Center. This community now has the historical distinction of being the place where Kennedy’s nearly lifelong fight for universal healthcare begins and ends.

After visiting the health center in 1966, Kennedy wrote and sponsored legislation that sparked the nation’s community health center movement. Because of Kennedy’s visit to Columbia Point, there are now 6,000 community health center sites across the nation caring for 18 million people.

Kennedy, who the National Association of Community Health Centers calls the “Godfather” of their movement, died late Tuesday after a yearlong battle with brain cancer. A memorial service was held at the JFK Library on Columbia Point. He will be buried at Arlington Cemetery this weekend.

“We at Geiger are mourning the loss of not only a friend, but also the founder of a movement for universal healthcare that we deeply believe in,” said Lou Brady, executive director.

“After visiting our center, Ted Kennedy was so impressed with the center’s model that he took up the cause of community health centers. After securing funds to help this center survive, he then sponsored legislation that clearly defined and established similar centers across the country,” Brady said.

“We think it’s very important and symbolic that his body lies at the JFK Library on Columbia Point, just a stone’s throw from the start of his unbelievable legacy of caring for others,” said Brady. “And so we say thank you and goodbye to you, our dear, dear friend.”

In a recent Newsweek interview, Kennedy spoke about his visit to Columbia Point.

“... it was a pilot project providing health services to low-income families in the two-floor office of an apartment building. I saw mothers in rocking chairs, tending their children in a warm and welcoming setting. They told me this was the first time they could get basic care without spending hours on public transportation and in hospital waiting rooms. I authored legislation, which passed a few months later, establishing the network of community health centers that are all around America today.”

A leading proponent of national healthcare reform, Kennedy also said he hoped the healthcare safety network established by community health centers would become the basis of a national healthcare insurance system for all.

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“The Original Neighborhood Health Center”