

Remembering Senator Christopher S. "Kit" Bond

It is with deep sadness that MPCA announces the passing of Senator Christopher "Kit" Bond, a resolute public servant and champion of healthcare access for underserved communities, on May 13, 2025. Senator Bond's lifelong commitment to improving the lives of the people of Missouri and the nation was evident in his tireless work to expand access to primary care, oral health, and mental health services.

During his distinguished tenure in the U.S. Senate, Senator Bond was an enthusiastic advocate and leading voice for Community Health Centers (CHCs). These vital health centers, which serve those without access to essential healthcare, flourished under his leadership. Through his advocacy, CHCs saw groundbreaking funding increases in the late 1990s, which helped them expand and provide services to thousands of people who had been previously underserved. Senator Bond's efforts led to a historic \$60 million funding boost in 1997, followed by an even larger \$100 million increase. These measures resulted in the most significant funding increases for CHCs in decades, ensuring that more individuals could receive the care they desperately needed.

In 2000, Senator Bond convinced then candidate for president, George W. Bush, to embrace CHCs as a presidential initiative if elected. George Bush visited Grace Hill Neighborhood Health Center, now known as Affinia Healthcare, in St. Louis on April 12, 2000, announcing that he would provide an additional \$4 billion for CHCs if he won the presidency. Bush won and through Kit Bond's leadership, dozens of health care access points opened across rural Missouri.

Senator Bond's commitment to the growth of CHCs in Missouri was impactful. When he retired in 2011, Missouri boasted 21 CHCs serving over 420,000 people, a marked increase from the 14 centers serving 190,000 individuals in 1999. Today, Missouri is home to 28 CHCs, providing essential healthcare to over 644,000 people, a third of whom are children. His efforts have touched the lives of countless residents in both urban and rural communities, leaving a lasting impact on the healthcare infrastructure of the state.

In recognition of his legacy, in 2009, MPCA's Board of Directors established the Christopher S. "Kit" Bond Community Health Scholarship. This scholarship, which assists individuals pursuing careers in healthcare for underserved communities, stands as a testament to his unparalleled dedication to improving health access. The scholarship will continue to benefit future generations of healthcare professionals, ensuring that Senator Bond's legacy lives on in the communities he worked so hard to improve.

His legacy as a tireless advocate for health care access will endure for generations to come.

Senator Bond's devotion to his constituents and his unyielding belief in the power of community healthcare will forever be remembered.

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