

Headquarters
7015 College Blvd. Suite 150
Overland Park, Kan. 66211
T: 816-756-3140
F: 816-756-3144



Government Affairs Office
50 F Street N.W., Suite 520
Washington, D.C. 20001
T: 202-639-0550
F: 816-756-3144

March 11, 2021

Contact: Carrie Cochran-McClain
816-756-3140
ccochran@NRHArural.org

NRHA secures big rural health wins in latest covid-19 relief package

Today, President Biden signed into law a \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package. Thanks to the advocacy of NRHA and its members, the package includes a number of provisions to protect and promote rural health.

Most notably, **NRHA has secured the infusion of \$8.5 billion for rural providers**, a key provision which NRHA worked closely with Senator Manchin's office on. The \$8.5 billion for rural providers will be provided through a fund called the *Health Care Heroes Sustainability Fund* (HCHSF), which will be similar to the Provider Relief Fund (PRF) but specific to rural providers. After months of advocacy, NRHA and its members are proud to have secured this much-needed relief on behalf of rural providers.

Additional rural health provisions of note include:

- **Additional funding for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) with language increasing eligibility for rural providers.** Previously, rural hospitals affiliated with a larger health system were deemed ineligible for the PPP if their affiliation brought them above the program's 500-employee threshold, even if the rural hospital itself only had 100 or so employees. The new bill will waive the affiliation provision, which will enable many more rural providers to participate in the program. NRHA has advocated for this change since the PPP was created last March.
- **\$500 million for the creation of an 'Emergency Grants for Rural Health Care' program** through the United States Department of Agriculture. This program will support rural hospitals' efforts around COVID-19 response and vaccine administration, as well as telehealth services.
- **\$7.66 billion in funding for the public health workforce** to carry out activities related to establishing, expanding, and sustaining public health at the state, local, and territorial levels.
- Supplemental appropriation allocation for the National Health Service Corps (\$800 million) and the Nurse Corps Loan Repayment Program (\$200 million), **bringing \$1 billion dollars of additional funding to health care workforce programs.** NRHA has advocated for additional funding for the health care workforce in each COVID-19 relief bill, and we are pleased that Congress has decided to provide resources to rural and underserved communities.
- An additional **\$55 billion in funding for COVID-19 vaccine deployment, vaccine awareness programs, testing, tracing, and mitigation programs.**

www.RuralHealthWeb.org

- **\$1 billion in funding to support vaccine confidence activities throughout the country.**
- **Additional funds for mental health support** for rural and underserved areas, including \$80 million towards Mental Health training, and \$40 million in funding to support the Mental Health professional workforce.

While we celebrate that these important rural health provisions have passed, we recognize that there is still more work to be done. NRHA is deeply disappointed that this legislation did not include a fix for changes to the payment methodology for the provider-based rural health clinic program, an extension of important telehealth provisions, or the continuation of Medicare sequestration relief. We are continuing to work hard to get these issues addressed, and we hope to see some developments on those issues in the coming weeks.

About NRHA

NRHA is a nonprofit organization working to improve the health and wellbeing of rural Americans and provide leadership on rural health issues through advocacy, communications, education, and research. NRHA's membership is made up of more than 21,000 diverse individuals and organizations, all of whom share the common bond of an interest in rural health.