

(Your letterhead here)

Date

Member of Congress

Address

Dear (Member of Congress)

I write to express my concern that Medicare Beneficiaries in rural America will lose access to health care services if important rural hospital programs are allowed to expire this year. If the Medicare Dependent Hospital (MDH) program expires October 1, over 200 rural hospitals will be forced to modify the services they offer, causing rural seniors to travel greater distances for care or, worse, forgo needed care entirely.

The obstacles faced by health care providers and patients in rural areas are vastly different than those in urban areas. The 62 million who call rural America home face a unique combination of obstacles to accessing health care, including physician workforce shortages and economic and geographic barriers. Rural Americans, per capita, are older, sicker and poorer than their urban counterparts. Rural hospitals are vital access points for rural residents and seniors to receive quality and affordable health care (these facilities care for 16.4 percent of American's Medicare patients, yet only account for 12.4 percent of the total Medicare hospital expenditures. Furthermore, according to a new study, it costs 3.7% less to treat rural beneficiaries in rural hospitals than in urban facilities). Expiration of the statutory authorization for MDHs will be devastating to the rural health care delivery system.

Congress created the MDH designation in 1990 to protect rural facilities from Medicare payment structures that disproportionately benefit urban systems. As you know, the MDH designation pays hospitals based on their historical costs of providing care rather than on a prospective schedule determined by what other hospitals charge. This allows for more flexible staffing options relative to community need, simplifying billing procedures, long-term predictability and stability, and creating incentives to develop local integrated health delivery systems, including acute, primary, emergency and long-term care.

On behalf of rural providers and patients in (name of state), I ask that you strongly support Medicare Dependent Hospitals and rural Medicare Beneficiaries.

Sincerely,

Your name

Address

Phone number