



# National Rural Health Association

The National Rural Health Association is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization with more than 21,000 members consisting of diverse individuals and organizations who share the goal of improving rural health. NRHA strives to improve the health of the 60 million who call rural America home.

## We fight for rural health equity

Rural populations often encounter barriers to health care that limit their ability to obtain the care they need. COVID-19 has devastated the financial viability of rural practices, disrupted rural economies, and eroded availability of care. Medical deserts are appearing across rural America, leaving many without timely access to care. Addressing rural inequities and declining life expectancy is a top priority for NRHA in 2022.

## We fight for a robust rural workforce

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the workforce shortage in rural America. Historically, rural areas have struggled to recruit and retain an adequate health care workforce. Seventy-seven percent of rural counties are health professional shortage areas, and close to one in 10 counties have no physicians at all. With far fewer physicians per capita, the maldistribution of health care providers between rural and urban areas results in unequal access to care and negatively impacts rural health.

## We fight for strong rural health infrastructure

Federal investment in rural health programs is a small portion of health care spending, but it is critical to rural Americans. These safety net programs expand access to health care, improve health outcomes, and increase the quality and efficiency of health care delivery in rural America. Investing in strong rural health infrastructure is critical to the future of rural areas.

## 2022 Rural Health Champion Award Winners

Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R- W. Va.)

Representative Donald McEachin (D- Va.)

## 2022 Legislative Staff Award Winners

Adeola Adesina (Senator Jeff Merkley (D- Ore.))

Emily Henn (Representative Sam Graves (R-Mo.))

## 2022 Advocate of the Year

Robert Duehmig, Oregon Office of Rural Health



**National Rural Health Association**  
[www.ruralhealth.us](http://www.ruralhealth.us) | @NRHA\_Advocacy



# 2022 Rural Health Requests to Address Rural Health Equity

## 1. Establish an Office of Rural Health within the CDC

In recent years, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has increased its focus on the health challenges and disparities routinely encountered by 60 million rural Americans. This has become increasingly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, as structural barriers to addressing rural health and safety needs have become more apparent. NRHA urges Congress to establish an office within CDC devoted to addressing rural health disparities and supporting rural public health infrastructure.

*Request: NRHA urges support of [S. 3149 / H.R. 5848, the Rural Health Equity Act](#) to create an Office of Rural Health within the CDC.*

## 2. Expand access to maternal health services

NRHA is encouraged by dialogue on Capitol Hill with the aim of expanding access to maternal health care services and reducing maternal mortality rates. Regarding that those conversations have not included rural stakeholders, despite the fact that maternal health outcomes in rural areas are much worse compared to their urban counterparts. NRHA encourages Congress to ensure that rural communities have access to the resources they need to improve maternal health outcomes.

*Request: NRHA urges support of [S. 1491 / H.R. 769, the Rural Maternal and Obstetric Modernization of Services \(MOMS\) Act](#) to authorize HRSA to establish rural obstetric networks.*

## 3. Congress should permanently expand telehealth provisions

Telehealth flexibilities were significantly expanded at the beginning of the COVID-19 public health emergency through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services 1135 waiver authority. As we near the presumptive end of the public health emergency, it is imperative that Congress makes these flexibilities permanent to ensure rural providers are able to continue providing care through telehealth. In particular, NRHA is supportive of continuing to allow federally qualified health centers and rural health clinics to provide distant-site telehealth services at equitable payment rates.

*Request: NRHA urges support of [S. 1512 / H.R. 2903, the Creating Opportunities Now for Necessary and Effective Care Technologies \(CONNECT\) for Health Act of 2021](#) or [S. 1988 / H.R. 5425, the Protecting Rural Telehealth Access Act](#) to ensure rural providers are able to continue providing services via telehealth beyond the public health emergency.*



National Rural Health Association

[www.ruralhealth.us](http://www.ruralhealth.us) | [@NRHA\\_Advocacy](https://twitter.com/NRHA_Advocacy)



# 2022 Rural Health Requests to Strengthen the Rural Health Workforce

## 1. Expand the Medicare Graduate Medical Education (GME) Program

The rural health workforce is overwhelmed and under resourced. The absence of a qualified, robust workforce is one of the largest obstacles rural communities face, and this has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, it is imperative that Congress provides adequate resources to ensure the next generation of physicians can train in rural communities. It is critical that all safety net providers, like sole community hospitals and critical access hospitals, can train medical students at their facilities. Further, it is important that a relevant definition of rural is used for the Medicare GME program to place residents in areas of greatest need.

*Request: NRHA urges support for S. 1893, the Rural Physician Workforce Production Act, to ensure rural providers are adequately represented in the Medicare GME program.*

## 2. Provide supplemental appropriations to programs like the National Health Service Corps and Nurse Corps Loan Repayment Programs

As rural health care providers continue to rebound from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical to ensure a reliable workforce is available in rural communities. As Congress evaluates additional need for COVID-19 relief in 2022, NRHA urges that supplemental funding be provided for workforce programs such as the National Health Service Corps and Nurse Corps Loan Repayment Programs to grow the rural health care workforce.

*Request: Support supplemental appropriation funding for workforce programs like the National Health Service Corps and the Nurse Corps Loan Repayment Programs in future COVID-19 relief legislation.*

## 3. Expand the nursing workforce to ensure rural communities have access to care

Rural providers are facing a shortage of nursing professionals. As Congress continues to evaluate ways to improve the rural health safety net, it is imperative that the nursing workforce is enhanced. NRHA urges Congress to devote resources to ensure nursing schools are equipped to increase capacity and build out the health workforce.

*Request: NRHA urges support for S. 246 / H.R. 851, the Future Advancement of Academic Nursing (FAAN) Act to authorize grants to support schools of nursing to increase the number of nursing faculty and students.*



National Rural Health Association

[www.ruralhealth.us](http://www.ruralhealth.us) | [@NRHA\\_Advocacy](https://twitter.com/NRHA_Advocacy)



# 2022 Rural Health Requests to Support Rural Health Infrastructure

## 1. Continue relief from Medicare sequestration through the end of the public health emergency

In December 2021, Congress continued relief from Medicare sequestration through March 31, 2022. Since then, the Omicron variant has presented a new obstacle for rural health providers. Simply put, now is not the time to reinstate a devastating two percent cut to Medicare payments for rural providers. NRHA urges Congress to continue relief from Medicare sequestration through Dec. 31, 2022.

*Request: NRHA urges support for H.R. 315 Medicare Sequester COVID Moratorium Act to continue Medicare sequestration relief through the end of the public health emergency, or until the end of 2022.*

## 2. Implement policies to support rural safety net hospitals beyond the public health emergency

In January, the Save America's Rural Hospitals Act was introduced to ensure critical rural providers are equipped to support their patients beyond the duration of the public health emergency. Of note, the legislation includes provisions to permanently eliminate Medicare sequestration for rural hospitals; extend payment levels for low-volume hospitals and Medicare-dependent hospitals; make permanent increased Medicare payments for ground ambulance services in rural America; provide a fix so provider-based rural health clinics are able to receive cost-based reimbursement; eliminate the 96-hour physician certification requirement for CAHs; and reauthorize the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program.

*Request: NRHA urges support for H.R. 6400, the Save America's Rural Hospitals Act to ensure critical changes to strengthen the rural health safety net.*



National Rural Health Association  
[www.ruralhealth.us](http://www.ruralhealth.us) | @NRHA\_Advocacy



# 2022 Rural Health Requests to Support Rural Health Infrastructure

## 3. Modernize Rural Health Clinic Program payment

With passage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021, provider-based rural health clinics became subject to the same capped reimbursement rate as freestanding rural health clinics for entities established after Dec. 31, 2020. NRHA encourages Congress to exempt all provider-based rural health clinics from this capped rate in exchange for voluntary participation in a quality reporting program. Through adoption of this proposal, Congress will receive data on the Rural Health Clinic Program that has been historically unavailable. Additionally, this will keep provider-based RHCs stable for the creation of additional sites to meet future need.

*Request: NRHA urges support for H.R. 6400, the Save America's Rural Hospitals Act to allow exemptions to reimbursement caps for rural health clinics.*

## 4. Ensure the 340B Drug Pricing Program remains a viable lifeline

Over the last few years, several large drug manufacturers have taken actions to undermine and threaten the longevity of the 340B Drug Pricing Program. For rural providers, the 340B Drug Pricing Program serves as a valuable lifeline to ensure they're able to provide necessary services to patients in their communities. NRHA urges congress to provide HHS the authority to stand up to these manufacturers and protect the program.

*Request: NRHA urges support for H.R. 4390, the Protect 340B Act of 2021, to ensure equitable treatment of covered entities and pharmacies participating in the 340B Drug Pricing Program.*



National Rural Health Association  
[www.ruralhealth.us](http://www.ruralhealth.us) | [@NRHA\\_Advocacy](https://twitter.com/NRHA_Advocacy)



# Fiscal Year 2022 Appropriations Request

Now, more than ever before, it is crucial for Congress to support programs that address severe health care crises in rural America. Rural health care providers, who were already struggling to keep their doors open prior to COVID-19, have been hit hard by the pandemic. Continued relief is needed to address the unique needs of rural America through the passage of a FY 2022 appropriations bill.

Rural health discretionary spending is a relatively small amount but is vitally important for maintaining access to care for individuals living in rural America. To better meet these needs, NRHA requests a modest funding increase of 10 percent for most of our itemized requests. Additionally, NRHA urges Congress to support the following FY 2022 priority requests to significantly improve rural health care access and affordability:

**Expand the USDA Rural Hospital Technical Assistance Program.** This program provides direct on-the-ground assistance and is flexible enough to meet the many varied needs of rural hospitals, especially those under critical duress from the ongoing pandemic. In FY 2021, the program was funded at \$2 million. The House-passed Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations package maintained funding at \$2 million for FY 2022. **NRHA urges Congress to increase funding for this important program to a level of \$5 million in the final appropriations package.**

**Include specified funding for the Rural Maternal and Obstetric Management Strategies (RMOMS) program** within HRSA's Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP). In FY 2019, FORHP used the Rural Health Outreach program to evaluate ways to improve the quality of obstetric care in rural America. **NRHA calls on Congress to build into HRSA's Rural Health Outreach budget a \$10 million carveout for the RMOMS program.** The House-passed Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations package specified \$10.4 million for FY 2022. **NRHA urges Congress to maintain this amount in the final appropriations package.**

**Expand physician training in rural areas** by supporting the development of new rural residency programs to address the workforce shortages faced by rural communities. Recent changes in CMS Medicare GME will expand the number of applicants but residency programs are needed to allow individuals to train in rural communities. The House-passed Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations package allocated \$12.7 million for the Rural Residency Planning Development program in FY 2022. **NRHA urges Congress to maintain this amount in the final appropriations package.**

**Reauthorize the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant Program to include technical assistance funding to support the buildout of the rural emergency hospital (REH) model.** In the CAA 2021, Congress created the REH model to allow struggling prospective payment system hospitals and CAHs to transition to a new outpatient hospital designation. Technical assistance is critical to ensure these struggling facilities can transition efficiently. The House-passed Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations package allocated \$80 million for the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant Program for FY 2022, including funding for technical assistance for hospitals transitioning to the REH designation. **NRHA urges Congress to maintain this amount in the final appropriations package.**



National Rural Health Association  
[www.ruralhealth.us](http://www.ruralhealth.us) | @NRHA\_Advocacy



# NRHA FY 2022 requests

(dollars in millions)

FY 2022 Appropriations Requests & Allocations					
Discretionary Funding Program	FY 2021 Omnibus	NRHA's FY 2022 Request	President's FY 2022 Budget Request	HAC FY 2022 allocations	SAC FY 2022 allocations
<i>Federal Office of Rural Health Policy Programs</i>					
Rural Health Research & Policy Development	11.1	<b>12.2</b>	11.1	11.6	11.1
Rural Health Care Services Outreach, Network & Quality Improvement Grants	82.5	<b>90.8</b>	90	90	90
Rural Hospital Flexibility Grants	55.6	<b>80</b>	57.5	80	57.5
State Offices of Rural Health	12.5	<b>15</b>	12.5	13	12.5
Telehealth	34	<b>37.4</b>	36.5	39	39
Rural Maternity & Obstetrics Management Strategies Program	5.4	<b>10.4</b>	10.4	10.4	10
Rural Residency Planning & Development	10.5	<b>12.7</b>	12.7	12.7	12.7
Rural Communities Opioid Response	110	<b>165</b>	165	140	165
<i>HRSA Health Workforce Programs</i>					
National Health Service Corps	120	<b>185</b>	185	185	150
Area Health Education Centers	43.3	<b>47.6</b>	47.6	50	47
Geriatric Workforce Enhancement	42.7	<b>46.5</b>	46.5	52.7	46.5
<i>Centers of Disease Control and Prevention</i>					
Office of Rural Health	-	<b>1</b>	0	0	0
<i>USDA Rural Development Programs</i>					
Communities Facilities	3.0b	<b>3.3b</b>	3.3b	3.3b	3.3b
ReConnect Broadband	635	<b>700</b>	700	990	700



National Rural Health Association  
[www.ruralhealth.us](http://www.ruralhealth.us) | @NRHA\_Advocacy

