May X, 2025

Senator/Representative

U.S. Senate/U.S. House of Representatives

Office

Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator/Representative,

The [State Rural Health Association/State Office of Rural Health] writes to express its deep concerns regarding federal rural health programming cuts proposed in the leaked fiscal year (FY) 2026 President’s Budget for the Department of Health and Human Services. The draft budget calls for the elimination of core, bipartisan, longstanding rural health programs that are essential to ensuring access to care in[state]. **The [SRHA/SORH] urges you to reject these cuts and fully fund rural health care programs at HHS.**

[Paragraph introducing your organization, what you do, etc.]

The leaked FY 2026 President’s Budget proposes to cut core rural health programs at the HHS Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP), which would lead to a critical underfunding of rural health care and ultimately threaten rural provider stability and patient access. Programs at FORHP deliver outsized value in terms of access to care, workforce support, and chronic disease management. Unfortunately, this proposal comes at a time when almost half of rural hospitals are operating with negative margins, including XX in [state]. Since 2010, rural America has seen 189 hospitals close or cease to provide inpatient care. The rural health care system cannot sustain cuts to federal programming.

**The following programs at FORHP would end if Congress enacts the President’s budget proposal, upending rural health care delivery in [state]:**

**Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program (Flex).** The Flex program helps Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) and rural communities deliver quality, sustainable healthcare. Flex is administered by State Offices of Rural Health and supports training and technical assistance, financial and quality improvements efforts, and emergency medical services integration. Flex is a lifeline that keeps rural hospitals open and improves quality of care.

Over 1,350 CAHs across rural America are supported through Flex, including XX in [state]. Since 2015, [state] received $XXX,XXX from Flex. Without this funding, rural hospitals will face financial setbacks and could close. By investing in Flex, rural communities retain access to quality care. [Please include any other specific activities that your Flex program funds.]

**Small Hospital Improvement Program (SHIP).** The SHIP programs provides for operational improvements, including data collection, quality improvement, and HIT implementation, for small rural hospitals. Small, rural hospitals in [state] rely on SHIP grants to improve quality and safety, modernize billing systems, address cybersecurity concerns, and prepare for the transition to value-based care. [State] received $XX,XXX in SHIP funds in since 2015, ensuring that small, rural hospitals can stay current and thrive in the modern health care environment. [Please include any other specific activities that your SHIP program funds.]

**State Offices of Rural Health (SORHs).** SORHs across the country serve as the backbone of rural health coordination within their respective states. SORHs work with rural health care providers and stakeholders across the state to administer Flex and SHIP programs, connect partners to resources, build capacity, and otherwise provide critical direct technical assistance.

Between 2015 and 2024, the [state] Office of Rural Health received $XXX,XXX from FORHP to administer these activities. [Please add any additional information/details on activities funded through SORH grants at your state office.]

**Rural Residency Planning and Development Program (RRPD).** As rural areas continue to face workforce shortages, RRPD is a proven tool to grow the rural physician workforce. Since its inception in 2019, RRPD has launched 54 new accredited rural residency programs and added 683 residency positions in disciplines such as family medicine, internal medicine, psychiatry, and surgery.

[State] has seen $XXX,XXX in RRPD investments. Rural training is the best predictor of a physician’s likelihood to practice in a rural area following completion of their residency program. Robust investments in workforce programs, like RRPD, are critical to combating perennial rural workforce challenges.

[Your organization] appreciates your consideration of our concerns and **urges you to invest in rural health care in the FY 2026 appropriations process.** If you have any questions or would like to discuss the importance of these programs further, please contact [name] at [phone/email address].

Sincerely,

[E-Signature]

Name

Title

Organization