

December 9, 2025

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Chair  
Appropriations Committee  
United States Senate

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Committee  
United States Senate

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chair  
Appropriation Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives

**RE: Urgent Need for Full FY 2026 Appropriations Legislation with Rural Health Requests**

Dear Chair Collins, Ranking Member Murray, Chair Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro,

On behalf of the National Rural Health Association (NRHA), thank you for your continued commitment to strengthening the health and wellbeing of the more than 60 million Americans who call rural communities home. As Congress continues to work on Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 appropriations, NRHA respectfully urges leadership to move beyond a short-term continuing resolution and enact a full-year, bipartisan Labor, Health and Human Services (L-HHS) appropriations bill that sustains and strengthens essential rural health programs.

NRHA is a non-profit membership organization with more than 21,000 members nationwide that provides leadership on rural health issues. Our membership includes nearly every component of rural America's health care, including rural community hospitals, critical access hospitals, doctors, nurses, and patients. We work to improve rural America's health needs through government advocacy, communications, education, and research.

A year funded through successive continuing resolution mechanisms creates instability for rural providers, state agencies, and community partners who rely on predictable federal funding to maintain operations, retain workforce, and plan long-term service delivery. While rural health programs have been operating at FY 2024 levels for years, the cost and the need for the services that these programs support have increased. Core programs at the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy support access to rural hospital viability, opioid use disorder prevention and treatment, access to community-based health care services, and rural residency program development.

Now, more than ever, it is critical that Congress fully funds and supports the rural health safety net. While current spending for all rural health discretionary programs is relatively small, it plays a critical role in solidifying the fragile health care infrastructure in rural communities. NRHA supports the amounts put forth for rural health programs by both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees in their FY 2026 bills released earlier this year and requests swift passage of these robust funding levels.

NRHA FY 2026 Rural Health Appropriations Priorities.

- Devote resources toward rural hospital viability by increasing the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (Flex) Program to \$75 million.
- Invest in the USDA Rural Hospital Technical Assistance Program with an allocation of \$5 million.
- Increase funding for rural health outreach services to \$109 million.



- Grow the rural physician workforce by increasing funding for the Rural Residency Planning and Development Program to \$14 million.
- Increase funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Office of Rural Public Health to \$10 million.
- Provide sufficient funding for rural behavioral health care and SUD treatment programs of \$155 million.

We believe maintaining fiscal responsibility is a top priority. Consistent with that priority, we hope you will recognize the important role these programs play in ensuring that rural Americans can access quality, cost-effective health care. NRHA full list of FY 2026 appropriations priorities can be found at <https://www.ruralhealth.us/advocacy/advocacy-priority-areas/appropriations>. We thank you for your leadership on rural health issues. If you have any questions or would like to discuss our appropriations requests further, please contact NRHA's Government Affairs and Policy Director Alexa McKinley Abel at [amckinley@ruralhealth.us](mailto:amckinley@ruralhealth.us).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan Morgan".

Alan Morgan  
Chief Executive Officer  
National Rural Health Association

CC:

Senator Shelley Moore Capito, Chair, Labor, Health and Human Services Subcommittee  
Senator Tammy Baldwin, Ranking Member, Labor, Health and Human Services Subcommittee  
Congressman Robert Aderholt, Chair, Labor, Health and Human Services Subcommittee