

December 9, 2025

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Majority Leader Thune, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Crapo, and Ranking Member Wyden,

Following Congress passing H.R. 5371, the Continuing Appropriations Act of 2026, the undersigned organizations write with grave concerns regarding the upcoming expiration of Marketplace enhanced premium tax credits (ePTCs). **We urge Congress to extend ePTCs before they expire on December 31, 2025.** Rural families, workers, and health care providers rely on these credits at disproportionately high rates, and their expiration would have severe and avoidable consequences for rural Americans.

Rural Americans are more likely to be self-employed or work for small employers that do not offer insurance. More than one third (35.2 percent) of rural adult workers are not offered employer sponsored coverage, compared to 29.1 percent of urban workers.ⁱ Without access to employer plans, rural residents depend heavily on the Marketplace and the affordability provided by premium tax credits.

Today, 2.8 million Marketplace enrollees live in rural counties and almost 80 percent of rural residents are enrolled in a zero-premium Marketplace plan through ePTCs.^{ii,iii} These subsidies expanded affordability across all income levels by eliminating the ACA's subsidy cliff and lowering out of pocket costs.

If ePTCs expire, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that 4 million people will lose coverage in 2026 alone, with rural communities feeling these losses most acutely.^{iv} Premium increases will be especially steep: rural county residents would see premium costs rise by 107 percent on average, compared to 89 percent for urban residents.^v Rural enrollees currently save an average of \$890 more per year than their urban counterparts due to higher starting premium costs.^{vi}

The impact extends well beyond households. Expiration of the enhanced credit is projected to result in a \$28 billion reduction in hospital spending over 10 years.^{vii} Rural facilities and providers, from those furnishing behavioral health care to rural health clinics to hospitals, will see revenue reductions related to ePTCs expiring. Specific to rural hospitals, estimates are that net patient revenues would decline by \$1.6 billion, uncompensated care costs would increase by more than 10 percent, and operating margins would decline by nearly 10 percent in 2026.^{viii} Rural hospitals, many already operating on narrow margins, will face mounting uncompensated care when residents lose coverage. This will accelerate the financial strain that has already pushed many rural facilities to reduce service lines or close entirely.

To protect rural families and prevent further destabilization of rural health care systems we urge Congress to permanently extend the enhanced premium tax credits, maintaining affordability for individuals with incomes above 400 percent of the federal poverty line and preventing premium spikes in rural counties. Loss of these subsidies would drive steep premium increases, reduce rural insurance coverage and place additional pressure on rural hospitals, many of which are already among the most financially vulnerable in the nation.

Allowing the ePTCs to expire would worsen existing health coverage and jeopardize access to care for entire rural communities. We urge immediate congressional action to permanently extend the ePTCs and preserve affordable coverage for America's rural families.

Our organizations stand ready to work with congressional leadership to ensure rural communities are not left behind. Please contact Alexa McKinley Abel (amckinley@ruralhealth.us) if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Physician Associates
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American Nurses Association
American Psychological Association Services
Association of Departments of Family Medicine
Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors
Louisiana Rural Health Association
Maryland Rural Health Association
Minnesota Rural Health Association
Missouri Rural Health Association
NAPCRG
National AHEC Organization
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Farmers Union
National Grange
National League for Nursing
National Rural Health Association
New England Rural Health Association
New York State Association for Rural Health
Oregon Rural Health Association
Pennsylvania Rural Health Association
Rural Health Association of Tennessee
Rural Health Association of Utah
Society of Teachers of Family Medicine
Texas Rural Health Association
The National Association of Rural Health Clinics
Virginia Rural Health Association

ⁱ National Library of Medicine. Rural Policy Research Institute: An Insurance Profile of Rural American Chartbook. Published 2022. Accessed 8, 27, 2025. <https://collections.nlm.nih.gov/master/borndig/9918716488106676/9918716488106676.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Lambrew J, Ford W. Rural Americans Face Unprecedented Price Hikes for Health Care. The Century Foundation. Published August 20, 2025. Accessed August 27, 2025.

<https://tcf.org/content/commentary/rural-americans-face-unprecedented-price-hikes-for-health-care/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Altman J. The Potential Impact Of Marketplace Enhanced Premium Tax Credit Expiration. *Health Affairs*. Published May 20, 2025. Accessed June 17, 2025. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/content/forefront/potential-impact-marketplace-enhanced-premium-tax-credit-expiration>

^{iv} Altman J. The Potential Impact Of Marketplace Enhanced Premium Tax Credit Expiration. *Health Affairs*. Published May 20, 2025. Accessed June 17, 2025. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/content/forefront/potential-impact-marketplace-enhanced-premium-tax-credit-expiration>

^v Lambrew J, Ford W. Rural Americans Face Unprecedented Price Hikes for Health Care. The Century Foundation. Published August 20, 2025. Accessed August 27, 2025.

<https://tcf.org/content/commentary/rural-americans-face-unprecedented-price-hikes-for-health-care/>

^{vi} Tolbert J, Ammula M. Who Might Lose Eligibility for Affordable Care Act Marketplace Subsidies if Enhanced Tax Credits Are Not Extended. *KFF*. Published March 3, 2025. Accessed August 27, 2025.

<https://www.kff.org/affordable-care-act/who-might-lose-eligibility-for-affordable-care-act-marketplace-subsidies-if-enhanced-tax-credits-are-not-extended/>

^{vii} American Hospital Association. Fact Sheet: Enhanced Premium Tax Credits. *American Hospital Association*. Published February 7, 2025. Accessed June 17, 2025.

<https://www.aha.org/system/files/media/file/2025/02/Fact-Sheet-Enhanced-Premium-Tax-Credits-20250207.pdf>

^{viii} Commonwealth Fund. Without renewal, enhanced premium tax credits, rural hospital revenues will drop by \$16 billion. The Commonwealth Fund. Published November 12, 2025. Accessed November 21, 2025.

<https://www.commonwealthfund.org/blog/2025/without-renewal-enhanced-premium-tax-credits-rural-hospital-revenues-will-drop-16-billion>