

April 20, 2026

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: FY 2027 Rural Health Appropriations Requests

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

On behalf of the National Rural Health Association (NRHA), we ask that you continue to support critical rural health programs as you plan Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 funding. Specifically, **NRHA is deeply concerned by the proposed eliminations of core rural health programs in the President's FY 2027 budget request.** These programs help increase healthcare access in rural communities, strengthen health networks, and focus on quality-of-care improvements for Critical Access Hospitals, small rural hospitals, and Rural Emergency Hospitals. **NRHA urges Congress to support the following FY 2027 priority requests to sustain and improve rural health care access and affordability.**

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.

The State Offices of Rural Health (SORH) Program. The President's Budget request would eliminate the SORH program. Since 1991, the SORH program has funded the backbone of rural health coordination in all 50 states. **We urge Congress to maintain this program and increase the SORH budget to \$15 million.** Federal funding has remained nearly flat despite rapidly escalating rural health needs, workforce shortages, and hospital instability. Further funding for SORHs is a high-value investment that strengthens state capacity and improves federal program reach.

The Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (Flex) Program. Congress created the Flex program as a bulwark against the structural challenges small rural hospitals face given their limited administrative capacity and resources. Despite its success and support for rural hospitals facing the risk of closure and financial stress, the President's FY 2027 budget request would defund this program. Flex funding provides infrastructure support that allows Critical Access Hospitals and small rural hospitals to strengthen financial and operational performance, and invest in activities that improve access to high quality care in rural areas. **NRHA urges Congress to support this program at the enacted level of \$70.277 million in FY 2027.**

The Rural Hospital Provider Assistance Program. Rural hospitals in low wage index areas continue to face significant disadvantages in recruiting and retaining physicians, nurses, and other health professionals due to lower reimbursement levels that limit their ability to offer competitive compensation. The Rural Hospital Provider Assistance Program aims to help rural hospitals in a low-wage area by providing additional funding to support critical workforce recruitment and retention. Created in FY 2026, this program is a formula allocation that awards the same amount to each eligible hospital. **NRHA urges Congress against adopting the President's Budget request to end this program before it has even begun.** Given equal distribution across many facilities, the FY 2026 funding level will likely have limited impact, therefore a significant increase in funding is necessary for adequate awards to eligible hospitals in FY 2027. Without this targeted support, many rural hospitals will continue to struggle to maintain adequate staffing levels and sustain essential services. **Providing \$125 million in FY 2027** will help ensure rural hospitals can compete for talent and continue delivering critical care to rural communities.

The Rural Hospital Stabilization Program provides in-depth assistance directly to financially distressed rural hospitals to enhance and expand service lines and address long-term solvency. The program received a \$10 million increase from Congress in FY 2026 and yet the President's Budget proposes to eliminate it. In response to recent congressional attention to rural hospital vulnerability, **NRHA urges Congress to preserve this program and increase funding to \$20 million for FY 2027** to allow the program to serve more rural hospitals.

For more information on NRHA's FY 2027 appropriations requests, please review our [March 2026 letter](#) to leadership.

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. 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.

Sincerely,



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