September 1, 2022

The Honorable Terri Sewell  The Honorable Carol Miller
Congresswoman  Congresswoman
House of Representatives  House of Representatives

Dear Representatives Sewell and Miller:

The National Rural Health Association (NRHA), a nonprofit organization of 21,000 members that represents the health interests of rural Americans, applauds your introduction of H.R. 8747, the Assistance for Rural Community Hospitals (ARCH) Act. This legislation will help rural hospitals and their patients by extending the Medicare Dependent Hospital (MDH) and Low-Volume Hospital (LVH) programs by five years.

Rural hospitals play a key role in the health infrastructure and economies of their communities. As the rural hospital closure crisis continues to jeopardize access to health services for hundreds of thousands of rural Americans, it is important extend programs such as these to protect rural health care.

Currently, there are 139 MDHs and 545 LVHs that play an integral part in the rural health safety net. First established by Congress in 1987, hospitals eligible for the MDH program must have 60 percent or more of inpatient days or discharges from Medicare patients. LVHs differ in the sense that eligible hospitals must have less than 3,800 discharges per year and must be located at least 15 miles from another health care site. The continuous financial stability provided by these programs will help preserve the rural health safety net.

The NRHA strongly supports the ARCH Act and commends your efforts to protect rural hospitals amid the ongoing hospital closure crisis. Without this piece of legislation, existing MDH and LVH programs would expire on September 30, 2022. It is important for Congress to act fast and ensure the stability of these hospitals before its deadline.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call Kristen Batstone at 202-639-0550 or by email at kbatstone@ruralhealth.us. We thank you for sponsoring this important legislation and being stalwart champions for rural America.

Sincerely,

Alan Morgan
Chief Executive Officer
National Rural Health Association