

# FY 2023 Appropriations Request Talking Points

## Main Points:

- It is critical Congress fully funds the rural health safety net before the end of the year
- Continuing resolutions are disruptive for rural health care providers as they create uncertainty, inefficiencies, and other challenges
- Spending for rural health programs is relatively small but provides critical stability for the rural safety net

## Our Requests:

1. Increase funding for the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (Flex) Program to \$73.5 million
  - The Flex program is used by states to implement specific rural strategies to ensure access to health care in rural communities
  - In FY 2022, \$62.3 million in funding was provided to continue and expand this critical program. In FY 2022, Congress provided the Flex Program with increased technical assistance funding for providers interested in transitioning to the new Rural Emergency Hospital (REH) designation. Increased funding will allow the REH technical assistance funding to expand and better help interested providers
  - **Talk about what elements of the Flex program are being used in your state and their impact**
2. Establish an Office of Rural Health within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with \$10 million appropriated annually to operate the office
  - There is not a devoted office within the CDC to serve the needs of rural communities currently. Establishing an Office of Rural Health within the CDC will serve as a direct resource for rural providers and patients
  - Report language included in the FY 2022 budget tasked CDC with evaluating and strengthening rural-focused efforts. We believe the creation of this office is the next logical step for Congress to take to bolster rural activities at the agency
  - **Talk about public health as a necessity/resource in rural areas to address rural health disparities**
3. Increase funding for the Rural Residency Planning and Development Program to \$13 million
  - The program provides grant funding to develop newly accredited, sustainable rural residency programs in Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA), 61% of which are rural
  - Increased funding will provide resources to help rural communities establish residency programs in rural areas in order to attract students to complete their residency training in a rural area
  - **Talk about workforce shortages and the struggles facing your community**
4. Increase funding for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Hospital Technical Assistance program from \$2 million to \$5 million
  - The Rural Hospital TA program helps rural hospitals better manage their financial business strategies
  - In FY 2022, Congress appropriated \$2 million for this program, and an increase is needed in FY 2023 to be a resource for the 453 rural hospitals at risk of closing
  - **Talk about the hospital closure crisis and mention how many are struggling in your community**
5. Provide sufficient funding of \$15 million for rural maternal health care programs
  - Rural maternal health outcomes are often worse than their urban and suburban counterparts. In rural communities, there are 23.8 deaths per 100,000 live births compared to 14.6 deaths per 100,000 live births in urban areas
  - To improve rural maternal health outcomes, sufficient funding is needed for the Rural Maternity and Obstetrics Management Strategies (RMOMS) program at HRSA and full funding of the provisions of the Rural Maternal and Obstetric Modernization of Services (Rural MOMS) Act included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022
  - **Talk about your state/community struggle with maternal care**
    - **Do you live in a maternal care desert? How close is the nearest obstetric center?**
6. Provide funding for the Rural Health Clinic (RHC) Behavioral Health Initiative outlined in President Biden's budget
  - In the President's FY 2023 budget request, \$10 million in funding was included to create the RHC Behavioral Health Initiative
  - Funding will allow for RHCs to expand critical behavioral health services to address the shortages in rural communities. Currently, behavioral health services at RHCs are not as prevalent as at other rural provider designations
  - **Talk about the need for expanding behavioral health services and the issues facing your community**