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NRHA applauds HHS rural relief dollars

Today HHS announced a \$10 billion rural COVID-19 relief fund, which was strongly advanced by the National Rural Health Association (NRHA). This funding will offer critical and rapid assistance to rural hospitals and health clinics that have been struggling to keep their doors open. The money will be distributed as early as next week.

“NRHA is grateful to President Trump for relief provided today to the rural health care safety net,” says NRHA CEO Alan Morgan. “Hundreds of rural providers were on the brink of closure, and this relief is absolutely critical.”

Details:

- This money will be distributed on the basis of operating expenses using a methodology that allocates payments proportionately to each facility and clinic;
- This distribution method recognizes the precarious financial position of many rural hospitals, a significant number of which are unprofitable; and
- Rural hospitals are more financially exposed to significant declines in revenue or increases in expenses related to COVID-19 than their urban counterparts.

The COVID-19 pandemic has spread to more than 1,000 rural communities. At the same time, hundreds of rural hospitals, rural health clinics, and small physician practices are on the verge of closure. The loss of revenue over the last several weeks due to the inability to provide non-emergency care is destabilizing core primary health care services in rural America.

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, rural providers were already financially fragile, with nearly half of all rural hospitals operating at a financial loss. Now, rural providers face catastrophic cash shortages and are forced to cut staff and services and potentially prepare for closure. Rural America cannot combat this virus nor recover from economic devastation without a vibrant health sector. That is why this funding is essential.

NRHA applauds the Administration for acknowledging the great needs of rural providers amid the COVID-19 pandemic. As we seek to resolve the health care crises in rural America, we look forward to continuing to work with Congress and the Trump Administration to provide relief to rural providers and ensure rural Americans are able to access the care they deserve.