

## **Rural Health Action Alliance Proclamation on National Rural Health Day, 2021**

On National Rural Health Day, 2020, a group consisting of the undersigned organizations [announced](#) the establishment of the Rural Health Action Alliance (RHAA), a coalition of health care providers and facilities providing high-quality, evidence-based care to millions of Americans, particularly to those living and working in rural and underserved communities. Over the past year, RHAA, as a collective group and individual organizations, advocated for equitable access to care in rural America, hoping to bridge the rural divide. This includes access to COVID-19 treatments and vaccines, continued telehealth expansion, and ensuring rural providers receive equitable resources compared to their urban counterparts.

At the time of RHAA's creation, COVID-19 was ravaging the nation, and more than 80 percent of nonmetropolitan counties had infection rates of 100 or more per 100,000 individuals. A year later, COVID-19 infections and deaths are declining in rural communities, although rates remain higher in rural areas than in metropolitan ones ([LINK](#)). As COVID-19's impact continues to diminish and additional population groups become eligible for vaccination, RHAA is optimistic and committed to advancing solutions to the long-term challenges facing rural providers and patients.

As we celebrate National Rural Health Day and reflect on the obstacles to providing health care in rural areas, RHAA urges Congress to consider the *Rural Health Equity Act* ([H.R. 5848](#) & [S. 3149](#)), introduced by Representative McEachin (D-VA) and Senator Merkley (D-OR), to create an Office of Rural Health within the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and address the unique health care challenges and inequities faced by rural communities across America. By creating a CDC Office of Rural Health, the agency will have more discretion and resources to analyze, study, and address disparities facing rural populations.

RHAA and its members will continue to be a resource to Congress and the administration as they formulate solutions to the ongoing public health emergency and longstanding rural health disparities. As we move forward, RHAA looks forward to working with elected officials to identify innovative ways to improve access to care in rural communities.

Sincerely,

*National Rural Health Association*  
*American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology*  
*National Association of Rural Health Clinics*  
*American Nurses Association*  
*American Physical Therapy Association*  
*American College of Nurse-Midwives*  
*American Podiatric Medical Association*  
*American Psychological Association*  
*National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health*  
*National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners*  
*National League for Nursing*  
*American Academy of PAs*  
*American Optometric Association*  
*American Association of Nurse Practitioners*  
*American Pharmacists Association*