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**NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION**

March 30, 2021

The Honorable Mark Warner  
United States Senate  
703 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Warner,

The National Rural Health Association (NRHA), a nonprofit organization of 21,000 members that represents the health interests of rural Americans, applauds your bipartisan introduction of the *Save Rural Hospitals Act of 2021* (S. 999). This bill would ensure that rural hospitals can keep up with the cost of providing care amid the novel coronavirus outbreak and help curb the trend of rural hospital closures.

The rural hospital closure crisis has devastated access to health care services for hundreds of thousands of rural Americans and catalyzed the collapse of rural economies across the nation. Over 135 rural hospitals have closed since 2010. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, over 47% of rural hospitals were operating at a loss and more than 450 rural hospitals had been identified as highly vulnerable to closure.

This crisis will continue to worsen without congressional action. In 2020, the United States experienced the greatest number of rural hospital closures in a single year since the beginning of the century, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, rural health care providers have been forced to decrease operations, layoff staff, and even close their doors to patients.

The Medicare Area Wage Index is a formula used by Medicare to reimburse hospitals that often results in disproportionately low Medicare reimbursement payments to hospitals in rural and low-wage areas. NRHA strongly supports the *Save Rural Hospitals Act of 2021* because it seeks to address this flawed formula by fixing severe and disproportionate disadvantages that unfairly penalize rural hospitals and ensures that hospitals are paid equitably for the care they provide. This bill would help rural hospitals weather the pandemic and keep access to high quality health care services in rural communities.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call Josh Jorgensen at 202-639-0550 or by email at [jjorgensen@nrharural.org](mailto:jjorgensen@nrharural.org). We thank you for sponsoring this important legislation and being stalwart champions for rural America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan Morgan".

Alan Morgan  
Chief Executive Officer