

Headquarters

7015 College Blvd.; Suite 150
Overland Park, KS 66211
Telephone: [816] 756.3140
FAX: [816] 756.3144

**Government Affairs Office**

50 F St., N.W. Suite 520
Washington, DC 20001
Telephone: [202] 639.0550
FAX: [816] 756.3144

NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

June 8, 2021

The Honorable Jon Tester
United States Senate
311 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso
United States Senate
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Tester and Barrasso,

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 *the Rural Physician Workforce Production Act of 2021* (S. 1893). This important legislation would address doctor shortages in rural America through critical changes in graduate medical education (GME).

Patients in rural communities often lack access to primary care physicians and specialists compared to their urban and suburban counterparts. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated workforce shortages and accelerated the need for rural solutions. One of the most promising solutions to this problem is increasing physician training in rural areas. Because rural hospitals often operate on narrow, and sometimes negative, margins, resources to commit toward residency training costs are scarce.

The *Rural Physician Workforce Production Act of 2021* provides the first substantive update to Medicare's GME policies in over two decades. The legislation enhances rural hospitals' ability to pay for residency training by establishing a new payment system, entitled the 'Elective Rural Sustainability Per Resident Payment' (ERS-PRP). Further, the bill gives critical access hospitals (CAH) and sole community hospitals (SCH) the ability to obtain the updated payment methodology. It also allows urban and suburban hospitals to claim training time for residents they send to CAHs.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call Josh Jorgensen at 202-639-0550 or by email at 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