

NRHA FY 2022 Appropriations Request

Establish an Office of Rural Health within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Request: NRHA calls on Congress to create an Office of Rural Health within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), with \$1 million appropriated annually to establish and operate the office.

Description: To assist CDC with oversight in rural America, this office would:

1. Serve as the primary point of contact in CDC on matters pertaining to rural health;
2. Assist the Secretary in conducting, coordinating, promoting, and disseminating data and research regarding public health issues affecting rural populations;
3. Work across CDC to develop, refine, and promulgate policies, best practices, lessons learned, and coordinated successful programs to improve care, services, and social determinants of health for populations who reside in rural areas of the United States;
4. Conduct, support, and disseminate rural health research, educational outreach, and evidence-based interventions to prevent death, disease, injury, and disability, and promote healthy behaviors in rural populations;
5. Identify disparities in the availability and accessibility of health care and public health interventions for populations living in rural areas; and
6. Administer grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts to provide technical assistance and other activities as necessary to support activities related to improving health and healthcare in rural areas

Context: In recent years, CDC has expanded its focus on the health and disparities faced by the 57 million Americans who call rural home. This focus has become increasingly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, as structural barriers to addressing the health and safety needs of rural populations has become more evident. Many of the public health agencies that serve our rural communities have faced significant challenges related to staffing, budgets, and ensuring access to basic public health services, which have been jeopardized during the pandemic. Further, they have become increasingly reliant on state and federal resources as local tax base support has diminished due to struggling local economies, which has also worsened during the pandemic.

CDC has been tasked with the herculean duty of overseeing and managing vaccine and testing deployment, as well as tracing and mitigation programs: all of which are key to rural America, which has been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The CDC Office of Rural Health would play a pivotal role in supporting rural public health agencies and workers as they serve their communities through the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) and as they prepare for future public health crises.

