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NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

April 14, 2021

The Honorable Fred Keller
United States House of Representatives
1717 Longworth House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Representative Keller,

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 *Reviewing Urban and Rural Adjustments to Level Hospital Expenses and Lopsided Payments (RURAL HELP) Act* (H.R. 1749). This bill would bring parity to inpatient Medicare reimbursement payments between rural and urban hospitals.

The rural hospital closure crisis has devastated access to health 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. 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 *RURAL HELP Act* would help vulnerable hospitals at risk of closure. NRHA strongly supports this critical legislation, which will help struggling rural hospitals survive by requiring the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to determine the precise level of systemic disparity that exists between urban and rural hospital payments in the annual Inpatient Prospective Payment System (IPPS). Further, once the disparity evaluation is completed, it directs the Secretary to make an adjustment to CMS payment policies to make up for the discrepancy.

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", written in a cursive style.

Alan Morgan
Chief Executive Officer