

**Talking Points:** [2026 Urge Congress to Invest in Rural Health \(FY 2026 Appropriations\)](#).

- Since 2010, nearly 190 rural hospitals have closed or discontinued inpatient services. When a rural hospital closes, not only does the community lose access to vital health care, but a major employer and community lynchpin exits, affecting the larger community.
- In this economic environment, it is critical Congress uses every tool to equip rural providers with the stability they need to keep their doors open. Currently, nearly 50 percent of rural hospitals operating on negative margins.
- Rural providers suffer from long-standing challenges, including workforce shortages, low patient volumes, higher prevalence of chronic diseases, a lower socio-economic population, and challenging payer mixes.
- Rural health spending is a relatively small percentage of the federal annual budget but is vitally important for maintaining access to care for individuals living in rural America.
- [PERSONAL STORY OF THE IMPACT OF RURAL HEALTH AND IMPORTANCE OF FUNDING]
- Some key legislation and programs to highlight:
  - **The Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (Flex) Grant Program** improves hospital-based healthcare access for rural communities through working with Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs), emergency medical service (EMS), clinics, and health professionals.
  - **The Rural Health Outreach Services programs** support rural, community-driven initiatives that promote improved access to care, enhance care coordination, and foster sustainable solutions for chronic disease prevention and management in rural areas. In FY 2022, over 475,000 individuals received direct services in over 400 rural counties through these programs, with over 85% of grant recipients demonstrating improvement in one or more clinical measures.
  - **State Office of Rural Health Program (SORH)**. SORH are a one-stop shop for information for community leaders and healthcare providers in the nation's rural communities, growing collaborative approaches to rural health access and leadership and providing support to build capacity and resources to improve rural health.
  - **The Rural Residency Planning and Development Program (RRPD)**. RRPD supports the development of new rural residency programs to address the ongoing workforce shortages faced by rural communities. Since 2019, this program has created 54 new accredited rural residency programs or rural track programs in family medicine, internal medicine, psychiatry, and general surgery and received approval for approximately 683 new residency positions in rural areas.
  - **The Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP)** is a multi-year initiative that addresses barriers to treatment for substance use disorder (SUD), including opioid use disorder (OUD).
  - **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Office of Rural Health (ORH)**. The office enhances implementation of CDC's rural public health portfolio, coordinates

efforts across CDC programs, and has developed a strategic plan for rural public health that maps the way forward.

- NRHA Resources:
  - [NRHA Legislative Agenda](#)
  - [NRHA FY26 Appropriations Asks Table](#)
  - [NRHA Rural Program Reauthorizations](#)