



September 7, 2023

The Honorable Bernie Sanders  
Chairman  
Health, Education, Labor & Pensions  
United States Senate  
322 Dirksen Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy  
Ranking Member  
Health, Education, Labor & Pensions  
United States Senate  
455 Dirksen Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Sanders and Ranking Member Cassidy:

The National Association of Rural Health Clinics (NARHC) urges the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee to recognize the significant impacts of the over 5,300 Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) in 46 states across the country as it prepares for the upcoming hearing on *The Primary Care and Health Workforce Expansion Act*.

For more than 45 years, RHCs have served an indispensable role in the country's health care safety net, increasing access to outpatient services in rural, medically underserved areas. In 2022, RHCs served over 37 million patients, representing over 11% of the entire population and approximately 62% of the 60.8 million individuals living in rural America.

While RHCs receive enhanced Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement, the RHC program is distinct from the community health center program in that RHCs are not eligible for 330 grants. In fact, other than the RHC Vaccine Confidence Program, allocated during the COVID-19 pandemic, there has never been a grant opportunity solely for RHCs.

President Biden's FY23 and FY24 budgets both included a comparatively small, but critical \$10,000,000 grant proposal intended to cover the salary and other recruitment and retention costs of hiring behavioral health providers, specifically in RHCs where such providers do not currently offer these important services. Unfortunately, President Biden's request has not been appropriated or authorized by Congress thus far.

We ask that the Committee consider opportunities to authorize programs for RHCs given the essential role of the RHC program in increasing access to both medical and behavioral health services in rural communities across the nation. Please don't hesitate to contact Sarah Hohman at [Sarah.Hohman@narhc.org](mailto:Sarah.Hohman@narhc.org) with any questions or to discuss further.

Sincerely,

*Nathan Baugh*

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