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April 30, 2019

The Honorable Roy Blunt
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Blunt,

On behalf of the Missouri Association of Rural Health Clinics, I am writing to request your consideration in co-sponsoring the Rural Health Clinics Modernization Act of 2019 (S 1037), sponsored by Senator John Barrasso.

Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) are federally-designated clinics that care for patients, including those who are uninsured and low-income, in rural, underserved areas. There are approximately 360 RHCs in Missouri, serving patients in rural areas who often have no other source of care in their community. However, the RHC program is in desperate need of modernization to maintain access to healthcare in rural areas of Missouri and other states.

The RHC reimbursement model is designed to reflect the costs of delivering care in rural areas. Unlike a traditional clinician's office, RHCs are reimbursed an "all-inclusive rate" for every visit. This model is critical to ensuring the financial sustainability of rural healthcare.

Due to burdensome and outdated statutory language regarding the upper limit on Medicare reimbursement, many RHCs are reimbursed far below their actual costs. The 2019 reimbursement limit (\$84.70) is substantially below the average cost per RHC visit (\$130.86). Due to these financial pressures, 388 RHCs have closed since 2012, impacting almost 4 million residents' access to care.

The Rural Health Clinics Modernization Act of 2019 makes vital changes to the Medicare reimbursement policy by increasing the upper limit to better reflect the cost of rural healthcare. If this policy is not addressed, we are concerned more RHCs will close and Missourians will lose access to care.

This bill also addresses several other outdated aspects of the RHC statute, including:

- Aligning federal scope of practice laws for Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners with state scope of practice laws
- Modernizing outdated lab requirements
- Allowing RHCs to be the distant-site in a telehealth visit

Thank you for considering supporting this important legislation for Missouri's rural health clinics. If we can provide any additional information, please feel free to contact MARHC at 573-635-5090 or info@marhc.org.

Sincerely,

Michael Calhoun
President, Missouri Association of Rural Health Clinics