



June 20, 2019

Dear Senator Young,

The Indiana Rural Health Association strongly endorses the bipartisan Rural Health Clinics Modernization Act (S. 1037) introduced by Senator John Barrasso and Senator Tina Smith and we are writing to ask you to consider cosponsoring the legislation.

The rural health clinics (RHC) program was first created in 1977. Signed into law by President Jimmy Carter, the RHC program was designed to improve access to health care in rural, underserved areas. Over forty years later, we are happy to report that there are approximately 4,400 RHCs, providing quality care to rural and underserved patients. However, the program is in desperate need of some modernization if we are to succeed for another forty years.

The RHC reimbursement model is supposed to be based on costs, but due to the increasingly burdensome and outdated statutory limit on their reimbursement, independent RHCs are paid far below their costs to deliver care. This legislation makes vital changes to Medicare reimbursement policy by increasing this upper limit to a level that better reflects the costs of delivering care in rural America. If we cannot fix this policy, we fear that the independent RHC model will not survive.

The Rural Health Clinics Modernization Act of 2019 also updates certain aspects of the RHC Conditions of Participation that are currently limited by a 1977 understanding of medicine. These changes include:

- aligning federal scope of practice laws for Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners with state scope of practice laws;
- modernizing the currently-outdated lab requirements; and
- allowing RHCs to be the distant-site in a telehealth visit.

Together, these provisions will strengthen the RHC program and better enable RHCs to continue their mission of providing health care in the rural and underserved regions of our country.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to one of our staff members, Deena Dodd, Dana Stidham or Jim Miller if you have any questions at ddodd@indianarha.org, dstidham@indianarha.org or jmiller@indianarha.org. Each of these individuals will be quick to respond to your requests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Don Kelso".

Don Kelso
Executive Director
Indiana Rural Health Association
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