



5/14/2020

The Honorable Adrian Smith
United State Congress
502 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Smith:

On behalf of the more than 4,500 rural health clinics (RHCs) represented by our association, we want to sincerely thank you for, once again, leading the way in Congress on rural health clinic issues. Last year, you introduced the RHC Modernization Act in the House, and this year, with the introduction of the Improving Telehealth for Underserved Communities Act, you have once again demonstrated that you are a champion for rural and underserved communities.

The unique structure of the rural health clinic program is an incredible benefit, but it comes with its own set of issues. On the one hand, it allows clinicians to provide care in rural areas and communities that would otherwise have no access to healthcare, but on the other hand, when changes are made within the broader healthcare system, they often do not translate well into the rural health clinic program.

When we expanded telehealth coverage as part of our efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, the telehealth policies adopted by Medicare did not extend to rural health clinics because of the unique nature of our program. While some of the hurdles were overcome in the CARES Act, the payment methodology is extraordinarily problematic and will result in many RHCs owing money back to Medicare in July.

That is why your leadership in introducing the Improving Telehealth for Underserved Communities Act is so important and we want you to know that we deeply appreciate the work that your entire staff has put in on this legislation. However, we would be remiss if we did not call out the fact that Joel has been incredibly responsive and a great pleasure to work with as we brought these nuanced issues to your office's attention.

Sincerely,

Angie Charlet

Dr. Angie Charlet, DBA, MHA, RN
President
National Association of Rural Health Clinics