



April 7, 2021

The Honorable Marsha Blackburn  
357 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dick Durbin  
Majority Whip  
711 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tina Smith  
720 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Blackburn, Majority Whip Durbin, Senator Murkowski, and Senator Smith:

The National Association of Rural Health Clinics thanks each of you for your leadership introducing the Rural America Health Corps Act (S. 924).

Recruiting clinicians to practice in rural areas has long been one of the greatest challenges in rural health. The National Health Service Corps (NHSC) program, which covers \$50,000 of medical school debt for a 2-year commitment to work in underserved areas, is an extraordinary recruiting tool for rural health care facilities. However, only one third of the current NHSC placements are in rural communities and far too many clinicians leave for higher-paying jobs after their two-year commitment.

Recruiting recent medical school graduates to practice in rural and underserved areas is certainly the first step in addressing our nation's rural health professional shortage areas. However, *retaining* clinicians in these underserved areas after their NHSC commitment is the real long-term solution to create equitable access to healthcare. With an emphasis on not just recruiting, but also retaining clinicians, the Rural America Health Corps Act would bolster the effectiveness of the NHSC program.

The legislation would increase the loan repayment amount for NHSC placements up to \$200,000 of medical school debt relief over a 5-year period. The longer commitment will give NHSC clinicians more time and incentive to put down roots where they are practicing, increasing the likelihood that rural healthcare facilities are able to retain medical talent.

The National Association of Rural Health Clinic strongly supports the Rural America Health Corps Act and looks forward to working with you to pass this legislation.

Sincerely,

*Nathan Baugh*

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