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Alliance for Rural Hospital Access Applauds Reintroduction of Rural Hospital Support Act

Bipartisan Bill Will Better Enable Rural Hospitals to Serve Their Communities

Washington, DC (March 31, 2023). The Alliance for Rural Hospital Access applauds and endorses the reintroduction of the Rural Hospital Support Act (S. 1110) by Senators Robert Casey (D-PA) and Chuck Grassley (R-IA).

Hospitals located in rural areas face unique challenges in delivering high-quality, cost-efficient care to their communities. Patients in these areas are more likely to face chronic or life-threatening illnesses, and rural hospitals often serve as their primary source of care. At the same time, rural hospitals are increasingly strained by negative operating margins, often due to lower patient volumes and more complex conditions. The Rural Hospital Support Act recognizes these challenges and takes steps to better enable rural hospitals to overcome these obstacles.

The legislation would permanently extend the Medicare Dependent Hospital (MDH) program and the Low-Volume Hospital Payment Adjustment, providing vulnerable hospitals with more predictable Medicare reimbursements and greater financial stability. In addition, the Rural Hospital Support Act would provide for a more current base year for MDHs and Sole Community Hospitals (SCHs) that are paid by Medicare on the basis of their hospital-specific rate, providing a much-needed update to this reimbursement methodology.

“Senators Casey and Grassley have long-recognized the challenges that rural hospitals face and the need for Congress to enact a long-term extension of these important payment protections,” said Eric Zimmerman, a representative for the Alliance for Rural Hospital Access. “We thank the Senators, along with the bill’s 13 additional original cosponsors, for their commitment to safeguarding the ability of rural hospitals to serve their patients and communities.”

The Alliance encourages Congress to enact the Rural Hospital Support Act in advance of September 30, 2024—the date the current MDH and low-volume extensions are scheduled to expire.

About the Alliance for Rural Hospital Access

The Alliance for Rural Hospital Access (ARHA) is a coalition of more than 50 hospitals nationwide with Medicare Dependent Hospital (MDH), Sole Community Hospital (SCH), and/or Rural Referral Center (RRC) status. The Alliance works to defend and enhance benefits for hospitals with these designations, so they can remain financially viable and continue to provide high-quality care to the communities they serve. For more information, please visit <https://ruralhospitalaccess.org/>.