



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

August 3, 2016

Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), the national leadership organization of more than 2,200 Catholic health care systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, sponsors, and related organizations, I am writing to express our support for S 607, the Rural Community Hospital Demonstration Extension Act, and to urge you to take up this legislation as quickly as possible.

The Catholic health ministry is committed to its mission of serving everyone, particularly the poor and vulnerable and those who otherwise would not have access to care. Rural hospitals play a vital role in that mission, serving populations which otherwise would not have easy access to health care services. The Rural Community Hospital Program, created under the Medicare Prescription Drug Improvement and Modernization Act and extended under the Affordable Care Act, benefits Medicare beneficiaries in rural areas by increasing access to medical care using a cost-based reimbursement for small rural areas in some of the least populated states. While these providers do not qualify as critical access hospitals, they nevertheless are not large enough to absorb the financial risk of the rural prospective payment system, and the Rural Community Hospital program (RCH) is vital to their ability to serve seniors in these areas.

S. 607 would extend the RCH demonstration until December 30, 2021. Although this provision has garnered bipartisan support as part of HR 5273, the Helping Hospitals Improve Act of 2016, the program's expiration on June 30 of this year has made it an urgent necessity for the House to take up the stand-alone Senate bill as soon as possible. In addition to extending the program, S. 607 also would solicit applications for the maximum number of additional rural community hospital participants in any state, with priority for those in the 20 states with the lowest population densities.

We hope you will join us in support of our nation's rural hospitals and their ability to care for seniors by taking up and voting for S. 607.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sr. Carol Keehan".

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO