

Huffman, Graves Introduce Save America's Rural Hospitals Act

January 25, 2022



Congressman Jared Huffman (D-San Rafael) and Congressman Sam Graves (MO-06) recently introduced the bipartisan Save America's Rural Hospitals Act to rescue rural hospitals on the brink of bankruptcy and help put these critical care providers back on solid ground.

“For years, rural hospitals have faced seemingly insurmountable odds: a raging pandemic, provider consolidation, and ever-increasing costs have piled challenge after challenge at their doors. And now, they’re facing added pressures brought on by the Omicron variant—leaving many hanging on by a thread,” said Huffman. “Rural hospitals and health centers, like the many in my district that have stepped up to care for our community, need legislative action and they need it now. My bill with Rep. Graves takes the steps necessary to help keep rural hospitals afloat and protect access to high-quality care, regardless of where folks live. By offering greater Medicare reimbursement, we can provide a much-needed lifeline to facilities on the edge of collapse—and save lives in the process.”

“This isn’t a new problem. Our rural hospitals have been struggling to keep their doors open to patients for years,” said Graves. “But, the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly made this crisis worse, as many critical access hospitals are facing severe workforce shortages and skyrocketing expenses while reimbursement rates fall behind. This legislation reverses disastrous Medicare cuts that have hamstrung our rural hospitals for years and will help many of them get back on track. There’s no better time to get this done.”

The Save America’s Rural Hospitals Act comes at a time when rural hospitals and health centers are facing unprecedented challenges. Since 2005, more than 170 rural hospitals across the country have closed their doors—forcing patients to travel further to get the care they need and leaving others to put off necessary healthcare. This problem has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and today 453 rural hospitals are currently operating at levels similar to those that have shut down over the last decade.

The Save America’s Rural Hospitals Act will reverse this dangerous trend by:

Eliminating Medicare sequestration for rural hospitals

Making Medicare telehealth service enhancements permanent for Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Rural Health Clinics (RHCs)

Extending increased Medicare payments for rural ground ambulance services currently set to expire December 31, 2022

The bill was applauded by the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health and the National Rural Health Association.

“The National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health applauds Rep. Graves and Rep. Huffman for introducing this comprehensive rural health bill. This comes at a critical time for rural communities and rural health providers as our nation continues to deal with the Public Health Emergency. We call on House members from both sides of the aisle to support and advance this important piece of legislation in 2022.” - Teryl Eisinger, executive director of National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health.

"The National Rural Health Association applauds Representatives Graves and Huffman for introducing the Save America's Rural Hospitals Act. Since 2010, 137 rural hospitals have closed their doors, leaving the majority of those communities without access to a health care provider. The provisions in this important legislation will ensure that the more-than-60 million Americans who reside in rural America will maintain access to the care they need. NRHA believes passing the Save America's Rural Hospitals Act will improve and expand access to health care in rural America." - Alan Morgan, chief executive officer of the National Rural Health Association.