



The Hospital + Healthsystem
Association of Pennsylvania

Leading for Better Health

July 26, 2023

Representative Glenn Thompson
Chairman, Agriculture Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson,

Access to quality health care is critical to maintaining strong, rural Pennsylvania communities. Hospitals play a vital role in providing that care. In addition, hospitals help build economically healthy communities. Rural hospitals are top job providers and support the economies of their communities, but many need financial support. As the Farm Bill takes shape, Congress should address this critical component of rural communities by including the following priorities.

The Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program provides essential, affordable funding to develop community facilities in rural areas. Despite being essential community facilities, rural hospitals have received little of the funding loans and grants from the program. We urge that funds be set aside for rural hospitals for capital development projects. Further, we support a funding increase for this program.

Telemedicine is relied upon by rural residents to help mitigate against long travel times to providers, provider shortages, and other rural-specific challenges that impede access to health care. While telemedicine is critical in rural areas, not all providers have the resources to purchase and maintain critical telehealth technologies. The Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant Program is an important tool for building out telemedicine capabilities in rural areas. HAP urges the program be reauthorized at \$90 million per year.

The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program - Produce Prescription Program improves nutrition and helps address health disparities. The program seeks to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables and reduce food insecurity, thereby decreasing health care use and associated costs. We support bringing together stakeholders from the food and health care industry to improve the health and diet of rural populations. We urge Congress to increase funding for this program.

Access to health care is at risk in rural areas. Hospitals in these communities not only make that care possible but improve local economies. Thank you for considering these policy priorities for inclusion in the Farm Bill.

Sincerely,

Nicole Stallings
President and CEO