

We will enhance the health, safety, and well-being of our community.

The Honorable Rob Portman
448 Russell Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Urging Support for the Rural Hospital Support Act

Dear Senator Portman:

On behalf of Community Hospitals & Wellness Centers – Bryan Hospital, we urge you to support the Rural Hospital Support Act and make the Medicare-Dependent Hospital and Low Volume Adjustment programs permanent.

Rural hospitals like ours are essential access points for care, economic anchors for communities and the backbone of our nation's rural public health infrastructure. We have maintained our commitment to ensuring local access to high-quality, affordable care during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, despite unprecedented financial and clinical challenges over the last two years.

The network of providers that serves rural Americans is fragile and more dependent on Medicare revenue because of the high percentage of Medicare beneficiaries who live in rural areas. Additionally, rural residents on average tend to be older, have lower incomes and suffer from higher rates of chronic illness. This greater dependence on Medicare makes our rural hospital more financially vulnerable to prospective payment.

To support small rural hospitals for which Medicare patients make up a significant percentage of inpatient days or discharges, Congress established the Medicare-Dependent Hospital (MDH) program in 1987. This program allows eligible hospitals to receive the sum of their prospective payment system (PPS) rate, plus three-quarters of the amount by which their cost per discharge exceeds the PPS rate. These payments allow MDHs greater financial stability and leave them better able to serve their communities. For CHWC Bryan Hospital specifically, it equates to 0.5% of our operating margin. Without action, the MDH program expires at the end of FY2022. The absence of MDH funding will only exacerbate the financial duress we find ourselves in with increased wages, more resource intensive higher acuity in-patients, and limited staffing resources for more profitable outpatient service lines.

With the Rural Hospital Support Act most likely not seeing any further movement, we need your help in championing an effort to introduce new legislation that will make these important programs permanent. We urge you to support such efforts to provide much-needed financial relief and stability.

Sincerely,

Signature

Title

Cc: James Longley: James_Longley@portman.senate.gov (note underscore between first and last name)