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June X, 2021

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independent Ave, SW Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra,

We write to express our concerns about the updated Provider Relief Fund (PRF) reporting requirements that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released on June 11, 2021. Unfortunately, the Administration continues to implement the PRF in a manner that will likely require hundreds of rural hospitals to return funds to the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

In March 2020, Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which appropriated funds to reimburse eligible health care providers for health care-related expenses or lost revenues attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic. The resulting PRF has assisted providers fighting the coronavirus, but many in rural America are not able to use their allocations as Congress intended.

Unfortunately, the June 11 HHS guidance does not include the provisions rural providers need in order to ensure the funding provides required stability, most notably:

- Use of funds after June 30, 2021, for Phase 1 recipients;
- Allowance of capital expenditures if funds were in-contract prior to the June 30, 2021, deadline; and
- Easing of reporting requirements for cost-based providers like Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs), Rural Health Clinics (RHCs), and rural Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs).

Since 2010, 138 rural hospitals have closed their doors, with more than twenty occurring in 2020, at the peak of the pandemic. It is unfathomable that a significant portion of this lifeline designed by Congress to support struggling providers will ultimately be returned to Treasury, instead of helping rural communities.

We therefore urge you to correct this guidance before June 30, 2021, when hundreds of rural providers will be forced to return PRF dollars to Washington, D.C. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Tom Emmer
Member of Congress