

July XX, 2021

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader Schumer and Leader McConnell:

The Critical Access Hospital Coalition, represented by the undersigned CAHs, urges Congress not to use Medicare funds as a pay for to advance other legislative initiatives. CAHs appreciate the efforts Congress and the Administration have made during the Public Health Emergency (PHE) to help hospitals care for patients, but now is not the time to reverse course and impose payment cuts on Critical Access Hospitals that are still struggling to care for patients.

The COVID-19 PHE continues and many of us are seeing cases increase, while we continue vaccination and testing programs, in addition to caring for patients who delayed care during the height of the pandemic. Simultaneously, CAHs have begun repaying the Medicare accelerated loans, as well as the Provider Relief Funds (PRF). Because of HRSA's restrictions on the ability of CAHs to use the PRF due our cost-based method of reimbursement, we face a looming threat of managing budget shortfalls as we begin to repay the PRF and wait for Medicare cost reports to be settled to pay for expenses that should have been reimbursed from the PRF.

On top of that, we understand that Congress is considering proposals to reclaim the remaining PRF funds that have yet to be distributed, as well as the \$8.5 billion in grants specifically designated for rural health care providers included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act. These funds, plus an extension of the mandatory Medicare sequestration, are reportedly being considered as a pay for in a new infrastructure bill.

CAHs were struggling before the PHE for reasons that have not abated during the pandemic. We urge you not to divert Medicare funds from us to pay for unrelated programs. Doing so could hasten the closure of more rural hospitals which would have a devastating impact on the rural residents in those communities.

We urge you to continue your support for rural health care providers and the patients we serve by finding other means of paying for non-health care proposals. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,