

NC Rural Health Association

2025 State Policy Priorities

Invest in Natural Disaster Resilience

Hurricane Helene's devastation in Western North Carolina has exposed critical vulnerabilities in our state's infrastructure. Income loss, school closures, and economic instability all have long-term impacts on health, increasing stress, limiting access to care, and worsening chronic conditions.

- **By investing in natural disaster preparedness and resilience, including mental health support, emergency health care access, and social services, North Carolinians will be better prepared to recover and rebuild after future storms.**

Build a Stronger Safety Net

Reimbursement rates for services like oral health care have not been updated in over a decade, forcing many providers to operate at a loss if they want to provide care.

- **With Medicaid Expansion opening new doors to care for nearly 600,000 North Carolinians, reimbursement rates must be modernized to allow providers to serve their communities efficiently and effectively.**

Expand and Enhance Access to Rural Broadband

Reliable, high-speed broadband is essential for every North Carolinian, from accessing telehealth services to supporting education, business growth, and social connections.

- **Expanding broadband infrastructure will ensure rural North Carolina can thrive.**

Build a More Robust Rural Health Care Workforce

Every rural resident deserves access to quality health care. However, 95 of North Carolina's 100 counties are geographic or population Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) for primary care.

- **By investing in training programs, loan repayment incentives, and workforce development, we can strengthen the rural health care system and meet our state's needs.**

Support Maternal and Child Health

Parents and children face unique challenges, especially in rural North Carolina where more people face long drives and limited access to pregnancy and birth care.

- **By investing in pregnancy, birth, and early childhood care, North Carolina can better support new families and foster the foundations for health throughout the lifespan.**

Address Youth Mental Health

North Carolina's youth mental health epidemic is worsening, with more children and teens experiencing anxiety and depression, among other challenges. Preventive care is critical in de-stigmatizing mental health conversations. It also helps reduce children's risk of developing long-term, untreated mental health disorders that threaten their health, overburden providers, and drive-up costs.

- **By providing insurance coverage for children up to 17 to receive a mental health well-check, providers have the necessary time and support to have preventive conversations, and children, youth, and families get broader access to whole-person health, building the foundation for healthier North Carolina.**

The North Carolina Rural Health Association is a collaborative network of associations, organizations, and individuals representing health care, education, economic development, local government, and other partners invested in supporting rural health. The organization and its membership are committed to amplifying the voices of North Carolina's rural communities to foster a movement that improves the health and well-being of all citizens.



NC RURAL HEALTH
ASSOCIATION