



NC RURAL HEALTH LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE

April 26, 2020

Dear Representative [XX]:

The North Carolina Rural Health Leadership Alliance (NCRHLA) — a collaborative network of associations, organizations, and individuals representing healthcare, education, economic development, local government, and a variety of rural stakeholders invested in supporting rural health — is committed to magnifying the voice of North Carolina’s rural communities with the intention of improving the health and well-being of all citizens. NCRHLA’s mission is to address rural health issues and find solutions to improve health, while focusing on four areas: access to care, behavioral health, social determinants of health, and disaster recovery. Unfortunately, the needs in each of these focus areas has been amplified as a result of COVID-19.

On behalf of all NCRHLA members, we are truly grateful for your recent work to address and lessen the impacts of this pandemic on North Carolina. Because many of our members work in (and on behalf of) rural communities, we also realize that more work needs to be done to ensure the health and well-being of the families, healthcare providers, and businesses who call rural North Carolina home. Therefore, the members of our alliance respectfully request the passage of additional critical legislation that will help North Carolinians facing devastating impacts as a result of the pandemic.

NCRHLA would greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with you to accomplish the following goals:

- **Broadband** – NCRHLA supports legislation to improve our state’s response to COVID-19 by providing financial support to expand broadband services that will enable greater access to telehealth services, and to maintain payment parity for telehealth services post-epidemic. High-speed internet is more critical than ever to enable telehealth services, including behavioral/mental health care for our rural citizens.
- **Safety Net Providers** – NCRHLA supports providing sufficient financial, staffing, and PPE support for safety-net providers so their practices remain open to serve patients during the COVID-19 crisis, and to continue treating newly uninsured and Medicaid-eligible patients who have lost health insurance due to unemployment. State support is needed to fill gaps in funding for safety-net providers who are not otherwise eligible to access COVID-19-related support through federal appropriations.





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- **Rural Hospitals** – NCRHLA supports financial and regulatory relief for the state’s rural hospitals to ensure that they remain open to provide critical care to our rural communities prior to, during, and following a medical surge due to COVID-19. Ensuring that these hospitals remain open is critical not just for access to healthcare, but also for the economic stability of rural communities. Members of NCRHLA encourage funding for rural hospitals to reimburse for lost revenue for forgone elective and non-urgent procedures, increased staffing costs, increased costs for equipment and infrastructure, and other COVID-19 preparatory expenses.
- **Individuals** – NCRHLA supports closing the health insurance coverage gap to ensure that North Carolinians have access to care when they most need it. In the midst of COVID-19 response, NCRHLA also supports state legislative action to ensure that both testing and treatment for COVID-19 uninsured patients qualify for federal reimbursement.

Once again, our members thank you for all you have done to lessen the impact of the current health crisis on North Carolinians, and truly appreciate your consideration of these recommendations. Please feel free to contact Carla Obiol at carla.obiol@foundationhli.org should you have additional questions.

Best,

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Leadership Alliance and
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