

August 18, 2017

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

On behalf of the Illinois Health and Hospital Association's (IHA's) more than 200 hospital and nearly 50 health system members, I am writing to urge you to co-sponsor the Rural Hospital Access Act of 2017 (H.R. 1955/S. 872). This bi-partisan legislation would make the Medicare-dependent Hospital (MDH) and enhanced Low-volume Adjustment programs permanent.

Illinois' small and rural hospitals face unique challenges such as serving small populations, and a higher percentage of Medicare and older patients. Many of them also operate on slim or negative margins. In the past, Congress has enacted legislation that provides additional Medicare payments to certain rural hospitals to help those hospitals maintain access to care for their communities. The Medicare-dependent Hospital (MDH) Program pays rural hospitals that serve a high percentage of Medicare beneficiaries for inpatient services. These payments provide Medicare dependent hospitals the necessary stability to serve their communities. The Low-volume Adjustment is a payment for certain hospitals that accounts for the fact that hospitals serving a very low volume of patients are unable to recoup their fixed costs, which are necessary costs of operation. Certain factors beyond a hospital's control can affect those costs. Patient volume is one such factor.

Funding for these programs expires on Sept. 30, 2017. The Rural Hospital Access Act of 2017 would make these important programs permanent and we urge you to support this important legislation.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue and for your support of Illinois' small and rural hospitals.

Sincerely,

A.J. Wilhelmi
President & CEO

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