

# United States Senate

May 1, 2019

The Honorable Seema Verma  
Administrator  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services  
7500 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Administrator Verma:

I write in strong support of a proposal in the recently published proposed Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Fiscal Year 2020 Medicare Hospital Inpatient Prospective Payment System (IPPS) and Long Term Acute Care Hospital rule (CMS-1716-P) to address Medicare reimbursement for residents' time spent at critical access hospitals (CAHs). I strongly support this change and urge you to finalize it as quickly as possible for fiscal year 2020.

Medicare accounts for two-thirds of public funding for resident training programs. On August 19, 2013, CMS published revisions to the Medicare hospital IPPS that ended graduate medical education payments to hospitals that incur the costs of residents who spend a portion of their training time at CAHs. This rule created significant barriers to training residents in rural areas, which desperately need new physicians, by blocking Medicare graduate medical education reimbursement payments for these rotations.

The rural communities that are home to CAHs across the country and in Montana suffer from serious shortages of physicians. Physicians tend to practice where they train, so training more physicians in rural settings and CAHs is the only way this growing shortfall can be addressed. The proposed regulation would allow residents' time spent at CAHs serving rural communities to count towards the residency program's Medicare reimbursement. This change will not only grant regulatory flexibility to CAHs and existing residency programs, but also enable increased opportunity for physicians to train in rural America.

I applaud your attention to the needs of rural America that this revision espouses, and urge you to finalize this regulation. I will continue to work with you and my colleagues in examining the ways in which this proposal can be finalized and implemented most effectively and with the greatest benefit to rural hospitals. I look forward to working with you to bring more physicians to rural communities across the nation.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester