



July 3, 2019

Senator John Barrasso
United States Senate
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Tina Smith
United States Senate
720 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Barrasso and Smith,

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), which represents 134,600 family physicians and medical students across the country, I write in support of the *Rural Health Clinic (RHC) Modernization Act of 2019 (S 1037)*.

The AAFP has long advocated on behalf of its members who practice in or are associated with RHCs. These facilities play a critical role in providing health services for Medicare patients in rural and underserved areas. Family physicians who practice in these settings face challenges unique to their location and are burdened by outdated regulations and low payments.

The *RHC Modernization Act of 2019* addresses many of these challenges. Unlike most Medicare payments, payments to independent RHCs are capped and tied to the Medicare Economic Index (MEI). If enacted, this bill increases the upper limit on payment to physicians and other providers to \$115 over three years with a subsequent MEI adjustment thereafter.

The legislation also introduces key reforms that allows for greater flexibility for family physicians and other providers, including removing outdated laboratory requirements and expanding telehealth access. The AAFP supports the elimination of the current requirement that a nurse practitioner or physician assistant work at least 50 percent of the time the clinic is open.

The AAFP position paper "[Keeping Physicians in Rural Practice](#)" states that family physicians comprise 15 percent of the U.S. outpatient physician workforce but are responsible for 42 percent of outpatient visits overall. Rural populations depend on their family physicians, and this bill's enactment would greatly benefit them and their patients.

The AAFP stands ready to work with your offices to support passage of this important legislation and we appreciate the opportunity to comment. Please contact Eric Waskowicz, Legislative and Policy Strategist, at 202-655-4903 or ewaskowicz@aafp.org with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Munger, MD, FAAFP
Board Chair

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