



June 2, 2021

The Honorable Jon Tester  
U.S. Senate  
311 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso, M.D.  
U.S. Senate  
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Tester and Barrasso,

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), which represents 136,700 family physicians and medical students across the country, I write to express the AAFP's support for the *Rural Physician Workforce Production Act of 2021* (S. 1893). The bill would provide invaluable new federal support for rural residency training, which will help alleviate physician shortages in rural communities.

The nationwide shortage and maldistribution of family physicians and other primary care physicians is particularly dire in rural communities. While 20 percent of the U.S. population lives in rural communities, only 12 percent of primary care physicians and 8 percent of subspecialists practice in these areas. Although evidence indicates that one of the most promising ways to recruit physicians to practice in rural areas is through rural experiences during their residency training, numerous incentives in the Medicare program discourage hospitals from providing such opportunities—including in communities that desperately need new physicians.

Your bill would remove caps for rural training and provide new robust financial incentives for rural hospitals, including critical access and sole community hospitals, to provide the training opportunities that the communities they serve need. These financial incentives would extend to urban hospitals as well, for the specific purpose of growing the number of residents they train in “rural training tracks.”

In addition, your legislation will help address disparities in rural communities by strengthening the physician workforce. Rural Americans face greater socioeconomic barriers than their average urban counterparts. Rural communities also have higher incidence of poor health outcomes, including higher rates of all five leading causes of death in the U.S. The AAFP is committed to improving rural health across our country, and recently the established the [rural health initiative](#).

The *Rural Physician Workforce Production Act of 2021* represents a promising way to make progress on our national physician workforce problem, and we applaud you for your leadership. We look forward to working with you to move this legislation forward. For more information, please contact John Aguilar, Legislative Affairs Manager at [jaguilar@aafp.org](mailto:jaguilar@aafp.org).

Sincerely,

Gary L. LeRoy, MD, FAAFP  
Board Chair  
American Academy of Family Physicians

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