



## NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

June 27, 2002

The Honorable William Thomas  
 Chairman, House Ways and Means Committee  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 1102 Longworth House Office Building  
 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thomas:

I would like to express the gratitude of the National Rural Health Association for the rural provisions included within the Medicare Modernization and Prescription Drug Act of 2002 (H.R. 4954). We believe this legislation represents an important step towards improving access, quality, and equity for rural health care in America.

As you well know, many of the 61 million people who live in rural America have limited access to health care. Rural hospitals across the country continue to struggle with the staggering loss of funding that was set into motion in the 1997 Balanced Budget Act. Although there is no simple solution to the funding woes of rural health care, this legislation represents a good step towards ensuring that rural Americans have access to health care locally, where it's needed most.

We look forward to working with your committee in the future to address inequities within the wage index payment methodology and enhanced payment mechanisms for critical access hospitals (CAHs) and rural hospitals under 50 beds as included within the Rural Community Hospital Assistance Act (RCHA).

The NRHA is a national nonprofit membership organization that provides leadership on rural health issues. The association's mission is to improve the health of rural Americans and to provide leadership on rural health issues through advocacy, communications, education and research.

The NRHA appreciates your leadership on this issue, and we look forward to working with you and the committee in efforts to improve health and health care of all rural Americans.

Sincerely,

Val Schott  
 President

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