

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 29, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chair  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairs Murray and DeLauro and Ranking Members Blunt and Cole:

As you finalize the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) appropriations bill, we urge you to include report language directing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to establish an Office of Rural Health within the agency.

Obstacles in the delivery of health care to rural communities differ significantly from those in urban areas. Rural health providers continue to face enduring workforce shortages and socioeconomic hurdles, coupled with the recent COVID-19 pandemic, which have led to a history of inequity of health outcomes. Further, rural Americans face unique public health challenges, including increased rates of chronic disease, behavioral health conditions, and unintentional injury compared to their urban counterparts.

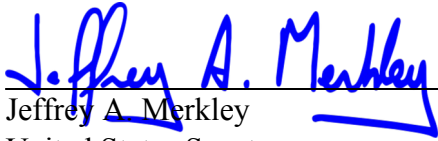
In light of these challenges, it is essential for the CDC to facilitate coordination with rural communities and public health agencies, while serving as a direct, identifiable resource for providers and patients alike. In order to ensure all of our constituents can lead healthy, resilient lives, we must see to it that the CDC engages in robust, intraagency work to equitably protect the health, safety, and security of the one-in-five Americans who live in rural areas.

A designated Office of Rural Health would give the CDC more discretion and resources to analyze, study, and address health disparities facing rural populations across the entire agency. Despite millions of Americans living and working in rural areas, and the unique health inequities and challenges faced by rural populations, there is currently no office within the CDC dedicated to the identification and rectification of these issues.

The Office of Rural Health would be tasked with identifying and improving health disparities and challenges faced by rural communities. It would serve as the primary point of contact within the CDC on matters pertaining to rural health, and coordinate within the agency to develop and promulgate policies, programs, and initiatives to improve health care and services for rural populations. Further, the Office would be tasked with conducting, coordinating, and disseminating research regarding rural health issues, and providing technical assistance to support activities related to improving health and health care access in rural areas.

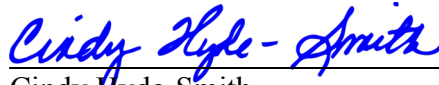
Thank you for your attention to this matter concerning public health in rural America.

Sincerely,



---

Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



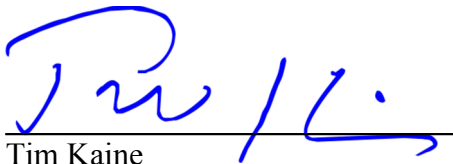
---

Cindy Hyde-Smith  
United States Senator



---

Michael Guest  
Member of Congress



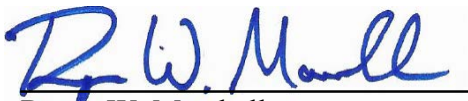
---

Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



---

Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress



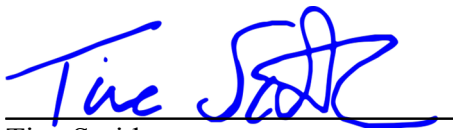
---

Roger W. Marshall  
Member of Congress



---

G. K. Butterfield  
Member of Congress



---

Tina Smith  
United States Senator



---

Abigail Davis Spanberger  
Member of Congress



---

Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress



---

Jim Costa  
Member of Congress