

6/04/2003 Moran Works to Improve Health Services for Rural America

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Legislation Provides Better Access to Home Health, Ambulance and Physician Services

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Jerry Moran, Co-Chair of the House Rural Health Care Coalition (RHCC), today introduced far-reaching legislation to improve Medicare reimbursements for rural health services. The Rural Provider Equity Act would improve patient's access to physicians, home health care, hospice, mental health, and ambulance services.

"There are many levels in the delivery of health care in rural America and we face unique challenges to make sure these services are available to the people who need them," Moran said. "Rural residents often have further to travel to reach a health care facility, so it's important that ambulance services are available to get them there and that doctors are there to care for them."

The Rural Provider Equity Act would help recruit and retain physicians who practice in rural communities by raising Medicare reimbursement rates. Rural doctors are currently reimbursed at a lower level than physicians in urban areas. In addition, the bill would help ensure the availability of both air and ground ambulance services, which is particularly important in rural communities that lack physicians and other health care personnel.

The bill would also improve access to home health and hospice services so that patients can continue to receive care in their homes. In addition, this legislation works to improve the delivery of health care services to the underserved. Clinics and community health centers that provide primary and preventive health care services to the uninsured and to low-income families would receive more adequate reimbursements.

"People in rural America should have access to the same quality care as those who live in more urban areas," Moran said. "Unfortunately, Medicare reimbursements are not keeping pace with the cost of providing care in our communities. It's a matter of fairness, and it requires a stronger federal investment in the health of America's rural health care providers."

Last week, Moran brought the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Thomas Scully, to Kansas to see first-hand the circumstances facing health care in the state.

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