

**Administrative Office**

521 East 63<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Kansas City, Missouri 64110-3329  
Telephone: [816] 756.3140  
FAX: [816] 756.3144



**Government Affairs Office**

1108 K Street NW, Second Floor  
Washington, DC 20005-4094  
Telephone: [202] 639.0550  
FAX: [202] 639.0559

**NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION**

October 27, 2009

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Hubert H. Humphrey Building  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

The National Rural Health Association (NRHA), representing the twenty-five percent of America's population living in rural areas, applauds the Administration for its swift action to address the potentially devastating effects of the current H1N1 outbreak by declaring a state of emergency.

Many Americans residing in rural areas, however, are still at a disadvantage due to limited provider access. For critical access hospitals (CAHs), the only outlet for patient care in many rural communities, ensuring patient access during this H1N1 outbreak is crucial. Among the list of requirements to which CAHs must adhere is a limit to their daily occupied bed count of twenty-five beds on any given day. In rural areas where a community's only hospital is their local CAH, patients requiring medical attention during this flu season are at risk of being turned away because of this requirement.

The President's state of emergency declaration was the first step in ensuring America's H1N1 problem is properly addressed, but in order to complete this process for rural patients relying on their local CAH, the law requires you to additionally file a waiver pursuant to section 1135 of the Social Security Act. This waiver would temporarily waive the CAH daily bed limit of twenty-five, and ensure that these small rural hospitals keep their doors open to all patients needing care.

The NRHA urges you to file a Section 1135 waiver as soon as possible to ensure patients who contract this potentially devastating illness will not be turned away from the treatment they need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth Landon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Beth Landon  
President  
National Rural Health Association