



February 28, 2018

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
Chairman  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander:

As the Committee prepares to markup S. 2278, the “State Offices of Rural Health Reauthorization Act,” I am writing to express the Healthcare Leadership Council’s (HLC) support for this legislation.

HLC is a coalition of chief executives from all disciplines within American healthcare. It is the exclusive forum for the nation’s healthcare leaders to jointly develop policies, plans, and programs to achieve their vision of a 21st century healthcare system that makes affordable, high-quality care accessible to all Americans. Members of HLC – hospitals, academic health centers, health plans, pharmaceutical companies, medical device manufacturers, laboratories, biotech firms, health product distributors, pharmacies, post-acute care providers, and information technology companies – advocate for measures to increase the quality and efficiency of healthcare through a patient-centered approach.

Rural healthcare is an urgent and critical issue. The 46 million Americans who live in these areas often have trouble accessing care due to a shortage of healthcare workers and long distances to healthcare services that are made more challenging by difficult terrain and severe weather. Rural residents are at greater risk of dying from heart disease, cancer, unintentional injuries, chronic lower respiratory disease, and stroke than their urban counterparts.<sup>1</sup>

S. 2278 would reauthorize the State Offices of Rural Health grant program and help provide rural communities with the resources they need to enable their residents to get and stay healthy. HLC is especially supportive of the bill’s provision that would allow the offices to recruit and retain health professionals. Rural areas require a trained, highly skilled, and stable healthcare workforce, but it is often difficult for communities to

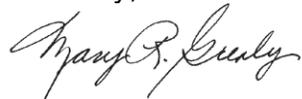
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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Rural Americans at Higher Risk of Death From Five Leading Causes,” January 12, 2017, <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2017/p0112-rural-death-risk.html>.

attract those professionals. With the additional resources given by this legislation, the state offices can assist with this important issue.

Thank you for the Committee's work on S. 2278. HLC looks forward to continuing to collaborate with you on our shared priorities. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Debbie Withey at (202) 449-3435 or [dwitchey@hlc.org](mailto:dwitchey@hlc.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mary R. Greal".

Mary R. Greal  
President