



The State Office of Rural Health

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Colorado Rural Health Center Sounds Alarm Over Proposed Cuts to Rural Health

The nonprofit State Office of Rural Health and State Rural Health Association represents over 716,000 Coloradans and serves as a lifeline to supporting the state's most vulnerable populations.

Centennial, CO, April 28, 2025 – The Colorado Rural Health Center (CRHC) is forcefully pushing back against the Trump administration's proposed FY 2026 budget and its drastic cuts to vital safety net programs across rural Colorado.

"Cutting funding that has been a cornerstone supporting the rural healthcare delivery system for decades is both short sighted and profoundly damaging," said CRHC CEO Michelle Mills. "Every dollar of federal funding invested in rural healthcare is an investment in thriving communities."

The Trump administration's draft budget proposal calls for the complete elimination of bipartisan, long-standing rural health programs including the funding behind the State Office of Rural Health, the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility program (FLEX), and the Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program (SHIP). These programs are essential to providing quality improvement, support, and technical assistance that is imperative to supporting the state's rural communities.

"CRHC stands for the rural communities of Colorado. The services and support that they provide are invaluable to those of us working in rural healthcare," said DeeAnn Sierra, RN, Chief Quality/Safety Officer at Rio Grande Hospital in Del Norte, CO. "Losing the State Offices of Rural Health would be detrimental to rural health care. They provide so many resources to rural healthcare facilities that would hurt each and every one of us rural healthcare providers in some form or fashion if they went away."

The Colorado Rural Health Center serves each of Colorado's 47 rural and frontier counties through support for the 42 rural hospitals and over 100 rural clinics. Last year alone, CRHC provided over 14,000 touchpoints of technical assistance to rural Colorado hospitals and clinics.

CRHC has provided information, education, linkages, tools, and energy toward addressing rural health issues since its founding in 1991. The organization serves a constituency of organizations in every corner of the state.

Rural health providers serve populations with higher percentages of Medicare, Medicaid, and uninsured patients. Combined with higher rates of chronic disease, lower incomes, higher rates of aging adults, workforce shortages, and sustainability challenges, the work of serving rural communities often results in financial strain for providers and reduced access to care for patients. Currently, 21 rural Colorado hospitals are operating with negative profit margins. Cuts to federal programs that support the sustainability of rural healthcare providers will have dire results and could lead to rural healthcare facility closures.

According to the National Rural Health Association, “Nationwide, hospitals support more than 16 million total jobs, including 5.7 million direct jobs in health care and 10.3 million ripple-effect jobs... Every dollar spent by a hospital supports \$2.30 of additional business activity.”

“Fully funding the bipartisan SORH, Flex, and SHIP grants is the best way to continue to ensure that rural healthcare facilities can sustainably serve their communities long into the future,” said Mills.

To learn more about advocating for the sustainability of rural healthcare in Colorado, reach out to the Colorado Rural Health Center at web@coruralhealth.org. Download the Snapshot of Rural Health to learn more about the challenges facing rural healthcare providers: <https://coruralhealth.org/snapshot-of-rural-health>.

About The Colorado Rural Health Center

The Colorado Rural Health Center was established in 1991 as Colorado's State Office of Rural Health. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, CRHC serves dual roles as the State Office of Rural Health and the State Rural Health Association. The organization's mission is to enhance healthcare services in the state by providing information, education, linkages, tools, and energy toward addressing rural health issues. CRHC's vision is to improve healthcare services available in rural communities to ensure that all rural Coloradans have access to comprehensive, affordable, high-quality healthcare. For more information visit www.coruralhealth.org, call 303-832-7493, or call toll free 800-851-6782 from rural Colorado.