



Patrick Morrissey
Office of the Governor

The Honorable Mehmet C. Oz, M.D.

Administrator

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

Department of Health and Human Services

200 Independence Avenue, S.W.

Washington, D.C. 20201

Re: Endorsement of West Virginia's Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Program Application

Dear Administrator Oz,

I write to express my unequivocal support for, and commitment to, West Virginia's Rural Health Transformation Plan. The West Virginia Rural Health Transformation (WV RHT) Program launches a once-in-a-generation effort to improve healthcare outcomes, build a healthy and long-lasting rural workforce, and develop a more vibrant economy.

West Virginia is an amazing gem: home to unmatched energy resources; gorgeous landscapes that make our state one of the most attractive tourism destinations in the United States; and a hard-working and indomitable spirit among our people who have great pride in our state. Today, West Virginia has a new discipline to improving the fundamentals of our economy that the state has never seen before.

West Virginia is forging its comeback story. However, to truly transform our state and standard of living to much higher levels, the Mountain State must dramatically reverse the poor healthcare outcomes that serve as a major barrier to high workforce participation and economic strength. Buttressed by strategic investments in technology – and unprecedented collaboration within our rural communities – we will build a future where rural healthcare is more accessible and effective in treating chronic conditions and preventing disease, where towns grow strong, and where families are living longer, healthier lives.

West Virginia faces the nation's toughest rural health and economic challenges, with poor health and disability as the top reason West Virginia possesses the nation's lowest labor force

participation rate. In much of the state, a trip to the doctor can mean hours of travel, small hospitals face persistent staffing shortages, and broadband gaps limit the reach of modern care.

Reversing this is at the heart of the WV RHT Program. The State's challenges are clear, but so are the desire of its people for change and the State's advantages: world-class universities, deep formal and informal community networks, and unprecedented federal and private investment in rural transformation. West Virginia can build a new model from the ground up—a model designed for the realities of rural life in the 21st century. By aligning health policies with economic growth, the state can convert its greatest obstacles into engines of opportunity. These strategies are not incremental; they are catalytic, designed to keep people healthy and connect care to every community. These strategies are innovative by design: we are not just spending money in the same old way but rather supporting transformative models that approach rural healthcare in a new, more effective way by focusing on healthy lifestyles, prevention and access to care when needed. This is what will make West Virginia a leader in rural innovation and a model for the nation. And importantly, our relentless focus is to use WV RHT funds to catalyze front-end solutions that prevent poor health and reduce public expenditures on the backend. **An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.**

We will build upon existing efforts to make rural West Virginia healthy again. We are already leading on national efforts and working with the Trump administration to clean up our food system by banning harmful dyes, secured SNAP waivers to eliminate soda as an entitlement under the program, and much more. This year with Secretary Kennedy, I announced a 'Mountaineer Mile' effort to promote healthy and active lifestyles, advancing Make America Healthy Again goals.

To go even further, **the State will tackle the foundational health barriers that hold back workforce participation** (including addiction recovery, behavioral health support, and treatment for chronic diseases like diabetes, obesity, hypertension, heart disease, COPD), making West Virginia home to rural health innovation, strategic technology and data deployment, and modernized healthcare delivery and payment systems, which ensure long-term sustainability. Our strategies address the root causes of poor health and economic stagnation while leveraging West Virginia's unique position to reinvent its system for the future.

First, West Virginia will confront the health-related barriers that keep residents out of the workforce. By investing in prevention, chronic disease management, and behavioral health, the State can restore its working-age population to health and productivity.

Second, West Virginia will establish itself as a center for rural health technology innovation and partnership. West Virginia will focus on innovative and appropriately disruptive technology as a means to improve rural health and use its university resources to lead this work. By doing so, we will become the state others look to for answers in health system transformation. West Virginia's geography—once viewed as a barrier—can become a competitive advantage as

the State tests, refines, and scales technologies that make care accessible anywhere: telehealth, mobile diagnostics, remote monitoring, and AI-driven analytics.

Third, West Virginia will improve access to care and sustainability of the healthcare system. Expanding transportation and broadband infrastructure, and reforming payments to reward value will allow the health care system to thrive even in small and remote communities.

The RHT Program will kickstart seven self-sustaining flagship initiatives:

1. ***Connected Care Grid*** will bring healthcare access directly to people—both in person and digitally—by integrating telehealth, remote monitoring, and local care coordination.
2. ***Rural Health Link*** will unify medical and community transportation into a one-stop system so distance and mobility are never barriers to care.
3. ***Mountain State Care Force*** will attract top clinical talent while training and retaining West Virginia’s own future providers.
4. ***Smart Care Catalyst*** will equip rural providers with payment and data tools that free time for patients and sustain provider viability.
5. ***Health to Prosperity Pipeline*** will connect recovery, care management, and employment programs to help every West Virginian find work and prosperity.
6. ***Personal Health Accelerator*** will use education and incentives to empower West Virginians to lead healthy, productive lives through prevention, nutrition, and exercise.
7. ***HealthTech Appalachia*** will incubate leap-frog technologies that improve outcomes and generate growth, establishing West Virginia as a hub for health innovation.

Starting from a deficit has given West Virginia the freedom to design a system that actually works—a modern, integrated, technology-enabled network built for the realities of rural life rather than inherited from outdated models. Where other states are modernizing old systems, West Virginia is building new ones—simpler, smarter, and more sustainable. Because every initiative strengthens the others, the system grows more resilient with each success. This approach will make the State’s progress deeper and more enduring, directly improving rural outcomes and saving Medicaid and public programs significant money in the future.

West Virginia’s approach is deliberately structured for durability. We are confident in this plan’s sustainability to ensure there won’t be a drop-off in programs at the end of the funding cycle. It does not rely on a single grant cycle or one-time project. It builds permanent capacity: infrastructure that serves health and commerce alike; a data and analytics backbone that strengthens every provider and payer; a trained workforce anchored in local communities; and payment models that reward results, not volume.

I have designated our WV Department of Health as the lead implementation agency. My office will continue to work with the Department of Health to coordinate strategy, interagency execution, accountability, and course-correction as needed to ensure this program is as catalytic

as possible for our rural communities and entire state. I certify that this application was developed in collaboration with the Depts. of Health, Human Services, Commerce, Transportation, Agriculture, and Education, as well as many others whose authorities and assets are essential to long-term success.

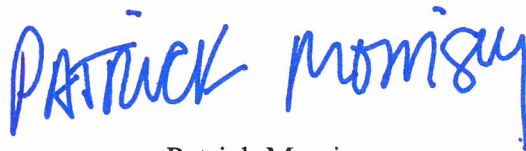
Beyond our state agencies, we engaged a broad coalition through an extensive RFI (from over 250 individual respondents and resulting in ~3,000 pages of input), over 50 interviews, three roundtables and listening sessions held with 30+ organizations across the state, and a tele-townhall with 17.1k rural citizens calling in. I have read many of the RFI submissions and attended each roundtable to hear directly from our people. Their insights shaped our priorities, clarified what will work on the ground, and informed the sequencing of implementation. Additionally, I have spoken to the governors of Virginia, Ohio, and New Hampshire to advance a multi-state collaboration focused on rural health. States agreed to explore a consortium to share best practices, pool purchasing power, and expand access to innovative care.

I will back this plan with action and new state funding. As the Chair of the WV RHT Leadership team, I will continue to identify and act on opportunities to advance other state policies that can strengthen the impact of this rural health program (e.g., aligning broadband expansion with RHT telehealth strategies).

I assure that we will adhere to all CMS funding restrictions and bar any prohibited expenditures. Every RHT dollar will go to allowable costs and to the most catalytic solutions that drive lasting impact. And I will hold this effort to measurable outcomes: more people accessing timely care, sustainable rural provider finances, shorter wait times, better chronic disease control, and higher workforce participation. We will publish metrics, own the results, and make changes quickly when the data demands it.

The commitment and leadership of President Trump has created a once-in-a-generation opportunity for rural America, previously passed over, to ensure those who feed and fuel the world have the same access to healthcare as their urban counterparts and spur health innovation for all Americans. West Virginia is poised to deliver on President Trump's vision.

Sincerely,



Patrick Morrissey
Governor