

Letters of Support for the West Virginia Rural Health Transformation Program

To: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

We, the undersigned, **express our strong and unified support for the West Virginia Department of Health’s application for the Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Program.**

Under Governor Patrick Morrissey’s “Health to Prosperity” vision, West Virginia is charting a new path—one that moves the needle on health outcomes, increased workforce participation, and economic renewal. The WV RHT Program embodies this vision by using strategic health, technology, and prevention investments to create a self-sustaining foundation for healthier residents, stronger communities, and enduring economic growth across the state.

This proposal represents a bold, statewide plan to modernize rural healthcare, expand access to timely, high-quality services, and align health improvement with economic opportunity.

We support the core activities that this plan advances to transform rural health for our Mountaineers, including:

Connected Care Grid: Build the infrastructure to bring virtual and in-person care access to people on-demand

- Expanding **telehealth, remote monitoring, and mobile-care access points** across hospitals, clinics, schools, and community hubs
- Equipping “**hubs and spokes**” with technology, equipment, and broadband integration to promote telehealth access
- Launching a **scheduling and referral platform** connecting virtual, in-person, and home-based care
- Building an **integrated data spine** across systems for real-time analytics and improved patient care coordination
- Supporting **EMS community-paramedicine** and treatment-in-place programs to reduce unnecessary emergency visits

Rural Health Link: Transport West Virginians to care when it’s needed

- Building a **unified, one-stop-shop health-mobility platform** connecting NEMT, public transit, and community ride programs
- Funding **vehicle and driver grants** to expand local and regional transit capacity
- Coordinating with EMS and hospitals to create an **efficient, data-driven transportation system** that lowers costs

Mountain State Care Force: Recruit, train, and retain the healthcare workforce of the future

- Doing early **outreach and educational programming** to bring more West Virginians into the healthcare industry
- Expanding **rural residencies, fellowships, and training sites** across key provider types
- Offering **incentives and “return-to-home” scholarships** for clinicians serving rural areas
- Supporting **preceptor and faculty positions** at community and technical colleges to grow training capacity
- Launching **apprenticeships and entry-level healthcare jobs** through the Learn & Earn model and community colleges
- Coordinating workforce recruitment and placement with **providers, universities, and state workforce programs**

Smart Care Catalyst (Pillar 1): Support tech-enabled innovation and regulatory relief

- Providing **technology and productivity grants** to modernize small hospitals and rural clinics
- Creating **shared-service collaboratives** for group purchasing and administrative efficiency
- Partnering to **reduce administrative burden and improve provider financial stability**

Smart Care Catalyst (Pillar 2): Paying for healthcare value and quality

- Co-creating and incentivizing standard **value-based payment models** to align incentives around quality and sustainability across payors
- Providing **support for rural providers to onboard** to value-based payment models

Health to Prosperity Pipeline: Help West Virginians rebuild health, rejoin the workforce, and thrive in their communities

- Expanding **health-to-work and recovery-to-work programs** connecting care, job coaching, and employment support
- Partnering with **employers and workforce boards** to fund on-site wellness and preventive programs
- Offering **incentives to MCOs or employers** for transitioning people off Medicaid or into commercial coverage
- Tracking **employment, retention, and health outcomes** to demonstrate long-term health-economic impact

Personal Health Accelerator: Empower healthy living through food as medicine, movement, and local partnerships

- Building **local wellness alliances** linking healthcare, community, school and youth, and civic partners to promote prevention and wellness
- Scaling **Food-as-Medicine, physical-activity, and caregiver-support programs** through competitive micro-grants
- Integrating **nutrition, lifestyle, and prevention data** into workflows for closed-loop referrals
- Expanding **maternal, infant and youth, and eldercare supports** and chronic-disease prevention programs statewide
- Partnering with schools, employers, and local organizations to embed **healthy living in everyday life**

HealthTech Appalachia: Incubate leapfrog technologies that innovate healthcare delivery and unlock economic growth

- Establishing **innovation funds** to seed and scale breakthrough health technologies
- Operating a **statewide Accelerator** providing funding for AI-enabled, digital-health, and consumer tools, with a particular focus on innovations that improve chronic-disease, SUD, maternal-health and other outcomes specific to rural West Virginia communities
- Partnering with universities, venture firms, payors, and healthcare systems and providers to build a **sustainable rural innovation ecosystem**

This plan reflects the wisdom of West Virginians—from our providers, payors, and universities to our churches, schools, and small businesses. Because it was built through statewide collaboration, we are confident these investments will succeed.

We look forward to supporting the Governor, Department of Health, Department of Agriculture, and other state agencies in ensuring these CMS resources are catalytic—creating enduring health and economic impact long after the grant period ends. **Together, we will help translate these investments into healthier people, stronger providers, and more vibrant rural economies.**

The WV RHT Program advances CMS’ goal to *Make Rural America Healthy Again* by improving access and outcomes, advancing innovative technologies and care delivery models, and creating sustainable systems that link health, work, and prosperity. **We believe it represents the kind of bold, results-driven model that rural America needs—and that West Virginia is ready to deliver.**

Signed in strong support,

WV Department of Agriculture

WV Department of Education

Higher Education Policy Commission

Aetna Better Health of West Virginia

AARP

Boone Memorial Health

CareSource WV

Center for Rural Health Development

Child Care Association

Community Care WV

Highmark Health Options West Virginia

Home Care Association of WV

Kanawha Regional Transit Authority

Marshall University

Marshall Health Network

Modivcare

Rockefeller Neuroscience Institute

Rural Health Association

The Health Plan

Vandalia Health

Valley Health Systems

WellPoint WV

West Virginia University

**Wigner Institute for Advanced Pharmacy
Practice, Education, and Research**

**WV Association of Local Health
Departments**

WV Association of Counties

**WV Behavioral Healthcare Providers
Association**

WV Dental Association

WV EMS Coalition

WV Health Information Network

WV Hospital Association

WV Medical Association

WV Nurses Association

WV Oral Health Coalition

WV Osteopathic Medical Association

WV Pharmacists Association

**WV Primary Care Association
(representing FQHCs)**

WV Public Transit Association

WV School of Osteopathic Medicine

WVU Health System

WVU Innovation Corporation

Additional Statements of Support for the WV RHT Program:

WV Department of Agriculture

“Health is grounded in the basic need for nutritious, locally grown, and healthy foods and can aid in the treatment and prevention of chronic diseases. WV’s 23,000 farms stand ready to empower healthy living through a food-is-medicine (FIM) model, which has been proven time and again to improve health metrics and reduce hospitalizations. West Virginia Department of Agriculture supports the Health to Prosperity vision for West Virginia as part of the Rural Health Transformation Program. WVDA is committed to the coordination of a statewide WV Grown FIM program that elevates rural health awareness, engages partnerships with health care providers and insurers, and promotes rural economic resiliency of our agricultural producers.”

Commissioner Kent Leonhardt

Boone Memorial Health

“Boone Memorial Health is pleased to support West Virginia’s application for the CMS Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP). The RHTP represents an important opportunity to strengthen rural healthcare, improve access to services, and advance healthier communities across the state. We endorse the overall goals and priorities reflected in the application and look forward to engaging with the Governor’s Office and state agencies as related policy initiatives are developed.”

Virgil Underwood
President and Chief Executive Officer

EMS Coalition

“The WV EMS Coalition fully supports West Virginia’s Rural Health Transformation Program application and its promise to advance Emergency Medical Services (EMS) across rural areas of the state. Through enhancing care coordination and enabling timely, on-site medical assistance, these efforts address the unique challenges faced by rural communities—including extended transport times and large service regions—while also helping to reduce long hospital transfers and overall healthcare costs.”

Chris Hall
Executive Director

Behavioral Health Providers Association

“WVBHPA strongly supports West Virginia’s Rural Health Transformation proposal. Strengthening the behavioral health infrastructure is key to improving overall rural health, workforce stability, and access to care. Through collaboration and innovation, this initiative will help build a sustainable, integrated system that ensures every West Virginian can access the behavioral health supports they need to thrive.”

Brad Story
Chief Executive Officer

Community Care of West Virginia

“Community Care of West Virginia (CCWV) fully supports the Governor’s “Health to Prosperity” initiatives and is dedicated to delivering high-quality healthcare at an affordable cost to the residents of rural West Virginia, thereby improving health outcomes. CCWV is committed to partnering with educational institutions and community organizations to develop and train the next generation of healthcare workers while promoting economic and community development. It supports advancing technology to utilize new AI tools and expand reliable access to telehealth, behavioral health, and addiction medicine services. Additionally, CCWV supports empowering patients to adopt healthy lifestyles through existing partnerships and programs, such as Food is Medicine, FARMacy WV, and Diabetes Management Pharmacy Program.”

Trish Collett
Chief Executive Officer

Highmark Health Options West Virginia

“For West Virginians to thrive, we must prioritize and transform rural healthcare. Success will depend on a coordinated, determined and multi-faceted approach uniting public and private sectors. Highmark Health Options West Virginia is proud to be an active, engaged and collaborative partner in these efforts, profoundly invested in our West Virginia neighbors, and committed to our mission of improving lives through better health.”

Jason Landers
President

Marshall Health Network

“On behalf of Marshall Health Network, I am pleased to express our strong support for Governor Morrissey and the State of West Virginia’s Rural Health Transformation Program Application. We are aligned with the Governor’s vision and commend the administration’s commitment to improving rural healthcare access and outcomes. This initiative represents a critical step toward addressing longstanding challenges in rural healthcare delivery and quality of life improvements. We are proud to stand behind this effort to drive meaningful change across West Virginia and beyond.”

Scott Raynes
President and Chief Executive Officer

Valley Health Systems

“On behalf of Valley Health Systems, we enthusiastically support the Rural Health Transformation Program application submitted by the Morrissey administration. As the largest FQHC in the state, we see first hand the importance of high quality primary care delivered by trusted community members across rural WV. We look forward to the opportunities presented by this program to not only expand access to existing services, but transform health through targeted high utilizer programs and prevention initiatives that keep people healthy and at home. Through expanded access to healthy eating opportunities, exercise programs, and wrap around primary care, we will Make WV Healthy Again.”

Matt Christiansen
CMO and VP of Health Affairs

West Virginia Child Care Association

“West Virginia Child Care Association strongly endorses the West Virginia Rural Health Transformation (WV RHT) Program as a visionary and comprehensive plan to modernize healthcare and strengthen community well-being across our rural state. By integrating innovation, workforce development, and technology-enabled care, this initiative directly aligns with CMS' mission to enhance access, quality, and sustainability in rural health. WV's plan for the RHT Program demonstrates a forward-thinking approach that will not only improve health outcomes but also drive economic vitality through workforce participation and local innovations. We strongly support this proposal as a model for how strategic investment and collaboration can create lasting prosperity for West Virginians and rural America alike.”

Katrina Harmon
Executive Director

West Virginia Health Information Network

“The West Virginia Health Information Network (WVHIN) applauds Governor Morrissey's vision for healthier West Virginia. WVHIN stands ready to expand its role as the state's health data utility facilitating interoperability, enhanced analytics, care coordination, and alerting among other essential functions.”

Sonia Chambers
Executive Director

West Virginia Hospital Association

“The 72 hospitals of the West Virginia Hospital Association (WVHA) welcome the opportunity to participate in the Rural Health Transformation grant that advances efforts to transform rural health across our state. Given the compressed application timeline, we were able to review a draft, but incomplete version of the proposal before the submission deadline. We appreciate sharing the draft and look forward to learning more details about certain provisions as the initiative moves forward. We are pleased to see the grant framework incorporates several core

priorities that align with WVHA's recommendations to the state: wellness pathways to improve the health of West Virginians, expanded access to care through healthcare workforce development, patient transportation programs, and investments in facilities and technology to better integrate and coordinate care in rural communities. These pillars represent critical building blocks for transforming rural health care delivery and we remain committed to working closely with the state as partners in implementing this important initiative.”

Jim Kaufman

President & Chief Executive Officer

West Virginia Oral Health Coalition

“The West Virginia Oral Health Coalition (WVOHC) appreciates the opportunity to align with the WV RHT Program and strongly supports this initiative to modernize rural healthcare, expand access to high-quality services, and align health improvements with economic opportunity. The success of the WV RHT has far-reaching implications for the state of West Virginia. By demonstrating effective strategies for improving health outcomes in underserved communities, we have the potential to drive meaningful changes in policy and resource allocation, ultimately leading to better access to care and improved quality of life for all West Virginians. The WVOHC is proud to stand in support of Governor Morrissey and the state of WV to create positive change in our state. We look forward to collaborating closely with the Governor and other stakeholders to ensure the success of this important initiative.”

Gina Sharps

Executive Director

West Virginia Primary Care Association

“While we have not had the opportunity to review the state’s proposal in its entirety, we recognize its intent to strengthen health care delivery and sustainability across West Virginia’s rural communities. We support the overarching goals of improving access, quality, efficiency, and strengthening workforce in rural health care and remain committed to working in good faith with the State and other stakeholders to maximize its implementation in a way that best serves patients, providers, and communities. Through collaboration and transparency, we believe this initiative can be shaped into a meaningful opportunity to advance rural health outcomes and strengthen the state’s health system for the long term.”

Sherri P. Ferrell

President & Chief Executive Officer

West Virginia Public Transit Association

“On behalf of the West Virginia Public Transit Association (WVPTA), and our member systems statewide, we are pleased to support and sign on to the joint letter in support of West Virginia’s Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) application to CMS. The WVPTA is especially

excited to support the Rural Health Link initiative. This collaborative approach aligns perfectly with our mission to expand access to care, improve transportation efficiency, and strengthen local transit capacity across rural West Virginia. We look forward to continuing to partner in advancing this important effort.”

Paula Smith
President

West Virginia University Health System

“On behalf of the West Virginia University Health System (“WVU Health System”), I write to express our support for the pillars contained in the State of West Virginia’s application to the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP), led by Governor Patrick Morrisey. The proposal’s first two strategies—addressing health-related workforce participation and establishing West Virginia as a center for rural health technology innovation—are especially aligned with our mission. WVU Health System is deeply engaged in clinical research, workforce development, and care delivery across rural communities. We are encouraged by the inclusion of Health Tech Appalachia, which leverages public-private collaboration to scale innovation in substance use disorder treatment and recovery, and its inclusion of the Rockefeller Neuroscience Institute and the WVU Innovation Corporation as partners.”

Albert L. Wright, Jr.
President and Chief Executive Officer
West Virginia University Health System

Ali R. Rezai, MD
John D. Rockefeller IV Chair of Neuroscience
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