



*A driving force for health equity*

*Submitted via electronic mail*

June 28, 2024

The Honorable Randy Feenstra  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1440 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

*Re: Support for H.R. 8245 - Rural Hospital Stabilization Act (as amended)*

Dear Representative Feenstra,

On behalf of OCHIN, we appreciate the opportunity to offer support for *H.R. 8245 - Rural Hospital Stabilization Act (as amended)*. OCHIN is a [national nonprofit health information technology and research network](#) that serves greater than 2,000 community health care sites with more than 33,000 providers in 43 states, reaching more than 6.1 million patients including [Critical Access Hospitals \(CAHs\)](#), [rural and frontier health clinics as well as federally qualified health centers \(FQHCs\)](#) and [local public health agencies](#). We strongly support the bill provisions that would provide grants to hospitals in rural areas to enhance and expand local access to services through modernized infrastructure including equipment such as health information technology and technical assistance. We applaud your focus on advancing policies and solutions that provide rural communities with the tools and resources to thrive and maintain their independence and self-sufficiency.

#### **OCHIN: DRIVING INNOVATION, ACCESS, AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY**

For over two decades, OCHIN has advanced health care solutions by leveraging the strength of our network's unique data set and the practical experience of our members to drive technology innovation for patients and providers in rural and other underserved communities. OCHIN offers technology solutions, informatics, evidence-based research, and workforce development and training in addition to policy insights. **We provide the clinical insights and tailored technologies needed to expand patient access, connect care teams, and improve the health of rural and medically underserved communities.** With over 137 million clinical records exchanged last year, OCHIN puts "one patient, one record" at the heart of everything we do to connect and transform care delivery. We ensure all health records flow seamlessly between patients and their many providers, giving clinicians greater insight into their patients' health and helping to complete the circle of care in rural communities. We also drive interoperability on a national scale through our growing health information network and automated electronic case reporting for public health. **In addition, OCHIN maintains a broadband consortium network to support rural health care providers access Federal Communications Commission (FCC) subsidies.**

#### **21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY HEALTHCARE DELIVERY**

Rural America's communities are resilient, self-sufficient, and adept at optimizing resources even when they are scarce. For rural communities, health and overall community and economic vitality are intrinsically linked. There are a range of policies and tools that create clear pathways to solve existing

barriers to access, improve health outcomes, and drive practice financial sustainability. **Modernizing the health IT equipment (including software) of rural hospitals is essential to improved care coordination, payment and delivery reform, public health readiness, and cybersecurity resiliency.**

Currently, rural providers have not received funding as other health care providers have to modernize their systems, so far too many are forced to utilize dated, fragmented technologies. The Rural Hospital Stabilization Act would provide grants to rural hospitals to upgrade or replace existing equipment (including electronic health record systems and software) and fund technical assistance. Far too many rural providers are operating with antiquated systems that undermine their sustainability. Alternatively, they utilize systems that are designed to meet the needs of large health systems that are not right sized and are not designed to optimize their operations or financial sustainability. The grant funding would drive critical modernization efforts that will allow rural hospitals to **offer patients access to services by leveraging a full range of tools to provide urgently needed cybersecurity hardening and allow them to optimize operations to improve overall financial sustainability.**

We appreciate your leadership and welcome the opportunity to share our learnings on the challenges and solutions that work to expand access to health care in Rural America. Please contact me at [stollj@ochin.org](mailto:stollj@ochin.org) if we can provide any additional information to support your efforts.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Stoll  
Chief External Affairs Officer  
External Affairs