

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington D.C. 20201

September 23, 2013

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

We are writing to express our serious concern about a recent Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Inspector General report recommending legislative changes that could reduce funding for Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) in Indiana to potentially unsustainable levels and limit access to needed care for Medicare beneficiaries in rural areas.

CAHs are the backbone of the rural health care safety net in Indiana. The 35 CAHs in our state provide round-the-clock care to all comers, ensuring that rural residents can get the care they need when and where they need it. There were more than 370,000 emergency room visits and almost 4,000 births at CAHs in Indiana last year alone. These hospitals also employ more than 8,500 Hoosiers in high-paying jobs and generate \$1.7 billion in economic activity each year.

The HHS Inspector General has recommended preempting individual state determinations about which small rural hospitals are critical necessary providers and revising the CAH conditions of participation to include alternative location-related requirements. Such changes likely would impact at least half of the CAHs in our state, lowering reimbursements and potentially leading to their closure. The result would limit access to care for patients in rural areas and negatively impact communities throughout our state. The IG report indicates that 64 percent of CAHs nationwide could lose their status should its recommendations be implemented.

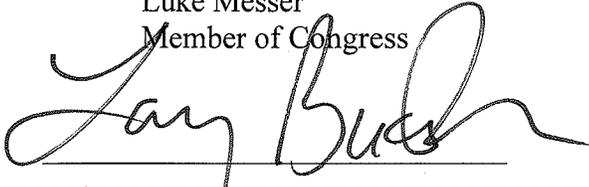
We disagree with the Inspector General's findings that recommended changes would result in savings under the Medicare program. CAHs provide cost-effective primary care in rural areas that is approximately 3.7 percent less expensive than in urban settings. Changes proposed by the Inspector General would force some patients to travel longer distances where they would seek more costly care, or worse, delay needed care until their conditions were more serious and costly to treat.

Our delegation strongly supports preserving the ability of safety-net hospitals throughout our state to serve vulnerable residents in rural areas. We would oppose any shortsighted legislative effort that would imperil the ability of our constituents to access needed care at these facilities and urge you to reject such recommendations.

Sincerely,



Luke Messer
Member of Congress



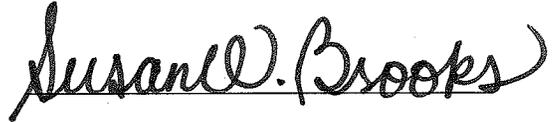
Larry Bucshon
Member of Congress



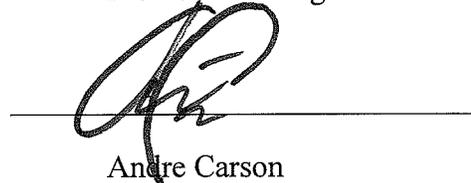
Todd Rokita
Member of Congress



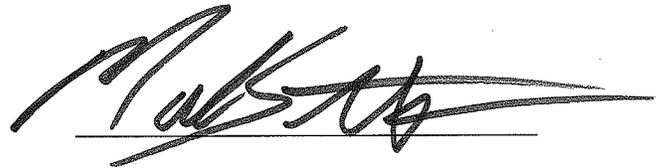
Jackie Walorski
Member of Congress



Susan W. Brooks
Member of Congress



Andre Carson
Member of Congress



Marlin Stutzman
Member of Congress