September 20, 2019

The Honorable Seema Verma
Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building, Room 445–G
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Administrator Verma:

I am writing to you today to express my support for the work being done by the Kansas Hospital Association and the Kansas congressional delegation to craft a pilot Medicare payment program for new models of healthcare delivery in rural Kansas. During my time as Governor, I’ve worked to ensure that all Kansans, regardless of location or financial wherewithal, have access to high-quality health care in their local communities. KHA’s proposal to allow small, rural hospitals experiencing financial strain due to population loss to transition to rural emergency medical centers if they so choose would give local leaders more options than simply continuing the status quo or closing their community’s hospital.

As I’ve traveled throughout Kansas during this past year, I’ve heard time and again how important local hospitals are to our state’s small towns. But it isn’t a secret that demographic changes are taking place all through rural America, leaving many of these communities with fewer people who are, on average, older than in urban areas. The financial burden they face in taking care of legacy infrastructure built for larger populations is of great concern, so it’s critical that we look for new, innovative solutions derived from the stakeholders who want to keep their communities vibrant for years to come.

This is why I’m so pleased that KHA is working with my administration and members of Congress on a solution that would allow very rural hospitals to receive increased Medicare reimbursement rates for various services in exchange for not having to provide overnight hospital stays and all the attendant costs that come with this. Indeed, we have a great medical transportation network all over Kansas and regional hospitals that provide high-quality acute care. I believe that if we allow our very rural hospitals to focus on providing emergency, clinical and outpatient care, they will be stronger financially and well-positioned for the future. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and please don’t hesitate to contact my office with any questions that you might have.

Sincerely,

Governor Laura Kelly