



**American Hospital
Association**

Liberty Place, Suite 700
325 Seventh Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004-2802
(202) 638-1100 Phone
www.aha.org

October 25, 2005

The Honorable John Thune
United States Senate
383 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Thune:

The American Hospital Association, on behalf of our 4,800 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, and our 33,000 individual members, is pleased to support your amendment to the fiscal year (FY) 2006 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill adding \$10 million for telehealth activities authorized by the Health Care Safety Net Amendments of 2002. We applaud your effort to fund these activities, which can play a vital role in increasing access to health care services for underserved rural and urban populations.

Congress overwhelmingly passed the Health Care Safety Net Amendments, and in doing so authorized more than \$80 million in grants to help providers overcome technical, legal, regulatory, and service delivery barriers to implementing telehealth programs. Several urban and rural hospitals would be among those who would benefit from these grant programs, which, unfortunately, have never received funding.

Your amendment will provide a vital down payment toward the resources needed to implement telehealth programs. These programs have the potential to expand access to health care services, improve training of health care providers, and expand the quality of available health information. As a result, hospitals will be better able to overcome many of the barriers to telehealth technology adoption and work to further improve the safety net for underserved populations, as envisioned by the Health Care Safety Net Amendments.

We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to ensure passage of this important amendment.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack
Executive Vice President

