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February 9, 2008

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
United States Senate
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Grassley:

On behalf of our more than 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, and our 38,000 individual members, the American Hospital Association (AHA) is pleased to support S. 318, the Medicare Rural Health Access Improvement Act of 2009, and applauds your commitment to America's rural health care providers.

Today's difficult economic times are having a direct impact on the ability of people to get the health care they need. Congress recognizes that it is important to ensure that people can access care, and your continued support of those providing care especially in rural areas is greatly appreciated.

By allowing Medicare-dependent hospitals to use the non wage-adjusted rate and a low-volume adjustment for Medicare inpatient services, you are helping support access to care in many rural communities.

And by creating a prospective ban on physician self-referral to hospitals in which the physician has an ownership interest, you are ensuring that decisions about patient care are made based on a patient's needs, not on a physician's financial considerations.

Again, we are pleased to support this legislation and look forward to working with you and your colleagues to achieve its passage.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack
Executive Vice President

