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September 17, 2009

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
United States Senate
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

On behalf of our more than 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, and our 40,000 individual members, the American Hospital Association wishes to express our support for your legislation, S. 1585, which would provide payment for certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA) services in critical access hospitals (CAH).

As an incentive to continue serving the needs of Medicare beneficiaries in rural areas, CAHs are permitted to secure reasonable cost-based funding for anesthesia services furnished by CRNAs. However, due to recent reclassifications of certain CAHs from rural to urban and “Lugar” counties, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is denying payment to these facilities for CRNA services. Further, despite previously reimbursing CAHs for the costs of having a CRNA available for emergency surgery, CMS recently began to deny payments for this critical service – adding to the financial burden facing many of these hospitals.

Your legislation would protect these services for patients in Illinois and across the country by both permitting pass-through payment for reasonable costs of CRNA services in CAHs that have been reclassified, and allowing reimbursement of on-call and standby costs for CRNA services.

We look forward to working with you to advance this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack
Executive Vice President

