

June 13, 2012

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Hospital Association's (AHA) more than 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, and our 42,000 individual members, I urge you to support extension of expiring health programs and provisions important to hospitals and the patients they serve.

Over the years, Congress has enacted several provisions to address the special challenges small and rural hospitals encounter in delivering health care services to the communities they are committed to serving. Most recently, in February Congress passed the *Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012*, which contained extensions of several programs important to hospitals. However, many of these programs are set to expire by the end of this year and need to be extended. In fact, some of these programs already have expired and will need to be extended retroactively.

Hospitals strive to provide their communities with quality care every day, and they face tough challenges to ensure patients continue to have timely access to essential services. However, it is often difficult to plan for community and patient needs when there is uncertainty over whether a program will continue. We ask that you address these concerns and extend the critical programs listed below:

- Payments for the technical component of certain physician pathology services.
- Ambulance add-on payments.
- The outpatient hold-harmless provision for rural hospitals and Sole Community Hospitals.
- Medicare cost payments for clinical diagnostic laboratory tests furnished in certain rural areas.
- Section 508 hospital wage index reclassifications.
- The Medicare-dependent hospital program.
- The enhanced low-volume adjustment for inpatient prospective payment system hospitals.



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The AHA is supportive of legislation introduced in the Senate to extend these programs. *The R-HoPE Act* (S.1680), introduced by Sens. Kent Conrad (D-ND), Pat Roberts (R-KS), Tom Harkin (D-IA) and John Barrasso (R-WY), would extend several of these critical provisions including the outpatient hold harmless and the direct billing for the technical component of pathology services. In addition, the AHA supports, *the Rural Hospital Access Act* (S.2620), introduced by Sens. Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Charles Grassley (R-IA), which extends the Medicare-dependent hospital program and enhanced Medicare low-volume adjustment until September 30, 2013.

Your support for extending these programs and provisions, among other expiring provisions, is vital. The AHA looks forward to working with you to help protect the patients and communities our hospitals serve.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack
Executive Vice President