



**American Hospital
Association®**

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January 27, 2015

The Honorable Pat Roberts
United States Senate
109 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 50510

Dear Senator Roberts:

On behalf of our nearly 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, and our 43,000 individual members, the American Hospital Association (AHA) is pleased to support the Critical Access Hospital Relief Act (S. 258). This legislation would remove the 96-hour physician certification requirement as a condition of payment for critical access hospitals (CAHs).

Specifically, S. 258 would amend the Social Security Act to remove the condition of payment but leave the condition of participation intact. A physician would not be required to state that the patient will be discharged or transferred in less than 96 hours in order for the CAH to be paid on that particular claim. CAHs would continue to need to meet the other certification requirements that apply to all hospitals as well as the condition of participation requiring a 96-hour annual average length of stay.

While CAHs typically maintain an annual average of 96 hours per patient, they offer some medical services that have standard lengths of stay greater than 96 hours. If CAHs are forced to eliminate these "96-hour plus" services, the resulting financial pressure on CAHs would severely affect their ability to operate and care for patients in rural communities. Your bill recognizes the essential role CAHs play in our nation's landscape and the need for them to be able to continue in that role.

As a longtime champion for America's rural hospitals, you recognize the negative impacts unnecessary, burdensome federal regulations place on these providers, and the impact they can have on ensuring access to health care in rural communities. Your legislation would provide important relief for CAHs, and help ensure all Americans have access to essential health care. Again, we applaud your efforts and are pleased to support this legislation. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to achieve passage of S. 258.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack
Executive Vice President

