

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 11, 2025

Mr. Abraham Sutton
Director
Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation
Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, Maryland 21244

Director Sutton:

We are writing in support of the application submitted by the Greenwood Leflore Hospital (GLH) in Greenwood, Mississippi, to participate in the Rural Community Hospital Demonstration (RCHD) program through the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation.

GLH serves as a critical health resource in the Mississippi Delta, one of the most medically underserved and impoverished regions in the United States. For more than 100 years, this rural, publicly owned facility with 25 beds has provided essential care to the community and surrounding region. It is home to a Level 4 Trauma Center, a 24-hour Emergency Room, and a wide array of vital services, including clinical, CLIA-certified laboratories, mammography, CT, and MRI services that are accredited by the American College of Radiology. Additionally, it operates a Level 2 Stroke Center that has received the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association Quality Achievement Awards. However, like many rural hospitals, GLH struggles financially under the current Medicare Inpatient Prospective Payment System payment methodology and has been forced to make difficult cuts to services that have greatly affected the area negatively.

In February 2023, GLH reduced its number of beds from 57 to 25 in an effort to secure Critical Access Hospital (CAH) status, which would stabilize its financial outlook. However, GLH was denied the CAH designation because of a Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) interpretation of the statutory mileage criterion. Participation in the RCHD will enable GLH to secure a reasonable-cost basis for inpatient care, reinstate services that have been closed, and staff swing beds to meet the growing need for skilled nursing and rehabilitation care. This additional revenue will stabilize the financial outlook for GLH and ensure quality care continues to be made available to the community.

If GLH were to close, access to health care in this already underserved region would be severely diminished. The Mississippi Delta, with more than 36 percent of its population living in poverty, has few alternatives for emergency or necessary healthcare services. Many residents also lack reliable public or private transportation, making close-to-home care a necessity. Additionally, the area's high reliance on agriculture means many in the service area work with dangerous machinery, further stressing the need for nearby emergency medical services to treat severe injuries quickly and effectively.

We urge CMS to consider Greenwood Leflore Hospital's RCHD application carefully, consistent with applicable rules and regulations. This program will have a tremendous impact on the health and well-being of the community and on the Mississippi Delta.

Sincerely,



ROGER F. WICKER
United States Senator



CINDY HYDE-SMITH
United States Senator