

February 24, 2014

The Honorable Adrian Smith
United States House of Representatives
503 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 50515

Dear Representative Smith:

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* (H.R.3991). This legislation would remove the 96-hour physician certification requirement as a condition of payment for critical access hospitals (CAHs).

Specifically, H.R.3991 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.

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 H.R.3991.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack
Executive Vice President

