



# WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P. O. Box 7882 Madison, WI 53707-7882

March 3, 2010

To: Senate Committee on Public Health, Senior Issues, Long-Term Care and Job Creation  
Chair Tim Carpenter  
Members of the Committee

From: Senator Luther Olsen  
Senator Mark Miller

Re: Senate Bill 553, The Rural Healthcare Access Act

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Thank you Chairman Carpenter and members of the committee for having a public hearing on Senate Bill 553, the Rural Healthcare Access Act. We appreciate your willingness to schedule this bill in your committee. As members of the State Senate who represent critical access hospitals, we believe this bill is an important bipartisan solution to protect quality health care in Wisconsin.

Although this may seem as though this bill is moving quickly, we have been working for several months to draft this bill carefully. The Wisconsin Hospital Association, Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative, the University of Wisconsin, the Department of Health Services, Legislative Fiscal Bureau and Legislative Reference Bureau have all worked collaboratively to find a solution to protect our critical access hospitals.

As you will hear from many others today critical access hospitals are instrumental in ensuring non-urban areas of our state have access to needed health care services. We rely on these facilities, their programs and their providers to serve our families on site and sometimes in their homes. Critical access hospitals are also an employer and essential to many communities livelihood.

This bill creates an assessment, specifically, on critical access hospitals, which in turn allows the state to draw down additional federal dollars. These dollars will go back to the critical access hospitals, provide additional funding for our rural residency programs and health care provider loan programs, and generate additional dollars for the MA Trust Fund.

We believe this is an important way we can support our critical access hospitals and our communities, who have asked for and support this legislation.