

Rural Aging Policy Priorities



Lutheran Services in America is a nationwide network of 300 health and human service organizations cultivating caring communities to advance health and opportunity for all with a focus on supporting and empowering older adults.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Older adults should have the opportunity to age with dignity and respect in the homes and communities of their choice. Older adults in rural areas should be full participants in the communities where they live and be afforded equal access to services and supports.

WHAT WE DO

We activate our national network to advocate for policies and funding that meet the unique needs of rural Older Adults, invest in the infrastructure needed to support aging in place in rural communities and recognize the urgency of preserving the vitality of rural America.

WHY RURAL AGING?

Aging in rural communities presents unique challenges to empowering older adults to maintain their health and their independence.

- **Limited infrastructure and private investment** in medical and nonmedical services and supports
- **Rapidly aging population** with increasing demand for services
- **Shrinking workforce** due to out migration of young people
- **Characteristic resiliency** with older adults less willing to ask for and receive assistance



**11
million**
Older adults
live in a rural
community

1 in 5
Rural residents
are older adults



LUTHERAN SERVICES IN AMERICA NETWORK

300 health and human services
organizations in 1,400 communities

Explore our interactive map at
lutheranservices.org

WE CALL ON CONGRESS

To champion older adults and caregivers in rural communities by supporting policies and funding that protect and expand access to care and meet the unique needs and circumstances of rural communities.

To address the critical shortage of direct care workers needed to protect and expand access to care in rural communities by supporting policies that promote competitive wages and strengthen recruitment and retention efforts.

Support Family and Nontraditional Caregivers

- **Incentivize full state implementation of the goals of the Recognize, Assist, Include, Support and Engage (RAISE) Family Caregivers law** which strengthens nontraditional caregivers' access to care, including requiring managed care organizations to cover respite care and other services and supports
- **Join the bipartisan, bicameral Assisting Caregivers Today (ACT) Caucus**, which provides education about the challenges caregivers face and advocates for policies that support them

Support the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act (S. 3211/H.R. 6205)

The bill has strong bipartisan support and would help increase the healthcare workforce in the following ways:

- **Award visas for direct healthcare workers** with emphasis on licensed nurses and certified nursing aides
- **Remove green card freeze** impacting international nurses
- **Recapture unused visas** from previous fiscal years for nurses and their families

Improve Rural Housing Programs

- **Support S. 1389, the Rural Housing Service Reform Act, bipartisan legislation which would improve federal rural housing programs**, cut red tape, and strengthen the supply of affordable housing by improving and strengthening several U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) rural housing programs
- **Expand alignment of needed supports and services through enhanced care coordination** in federally subsidized rural housing

Invest in Rural-Specific Research

Direct CMS And CMMI to fund rural-specific research about effective payment and service delivery models, including reinstating the Community Health Access and Rural Transformation (CHART) program and developing an Accountable Health Communities Model for rural communities

Improve Medicaid Reimbursement Levels and Reimbursement for HRSNs and Telehealth

- Support **increases in Medicaid reimbursement rates** for the full range of covered services in order to address current funding inadequacy, maintain quality and access, and support fair wages for caregivers
- **Expand reimbursement mechanisms** for community-based organizations to address health-related social needs (HRSNs) with limited healthcare infrastructure
- **Retain recently extended approval** for Medicare reimbursement for telehealth services and support Medicaid telehealth flexibilities by state

Fair Mileage Reimbursement for Rural Care Providers' Travel Time

Strengthen home and community-based workforce retention efforts by directing CMS to fairly compensate rural care providers for distance traveled to older adults receiving home and community-based services under Medicaid.