

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 15, 2019

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you begin consideration of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that the Subcommittee support substantial new appropriations at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to bolster rural emergency medical services (EMS) agencies and fire departments in delivering essential health care for rural America.

Across America's small towns, farming communities, and frontier areas, rural EMS agencies—including those operated by fire departments—are a lifeline to the health care system for residents, who on average are older, have higher rates of chronic illness, and lower incomes. Yet rural EMS faces challenges in delivering quality emergency response and service coordination, in part due to recent declines in primary care and hospital service availability, great distances between health care facilities, and low reimbursement rates. At the same time, EMS agencies face ever-greater responsibilities—preparing for disasters and bioterror threats, supporting the needs of an aging population, and serving on the front lines of the opioid crisis.

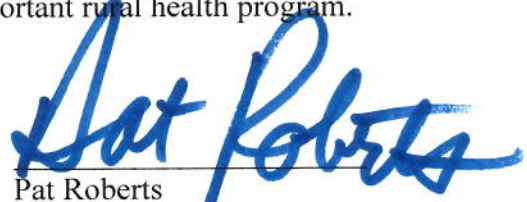
These first responders are often the only health care providers in their area and face difficulty in personnel recruitment and retention, and securing expensive equipment. In recognition of these challenges, Congress recently passed the Supporting and Improving Rural EMS Needs (SIREN) Act as part of the 2018 Farm Bill (P.L. 115-334). The SIREN Act reauthorized HRSA's Rural EMS Training and Equipment Program, to directly support public and non-profit rural EMS agencies in their efforts to train and recruit staff, provide education to satisfy certification requirements, and address critical equipment needs—purchasing everything from naloxone and first aid kits to power stretchers or new ambulances.

Robust federal investments to provide substantial grant awards across rural communities in each state will be necessary in FY 2020 to meet the evolving needs of rural EMS agencies and enable them to serve as the back-bone of health care and emergency response in their communities. Thank you for your commitment to this important rural health program.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



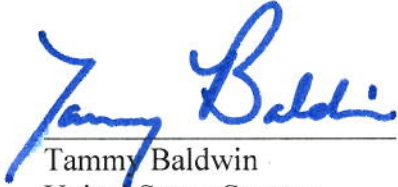
Pat Roberts
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



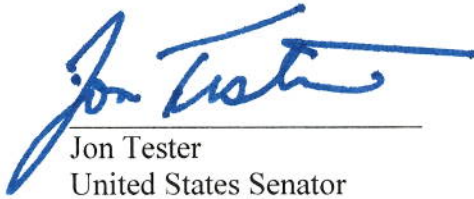
Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Martha McSally
United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator



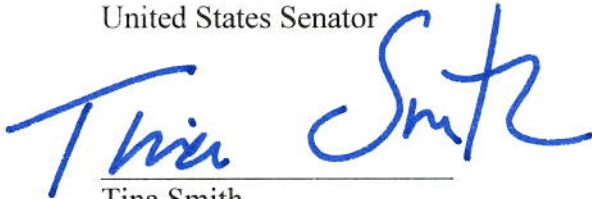
Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



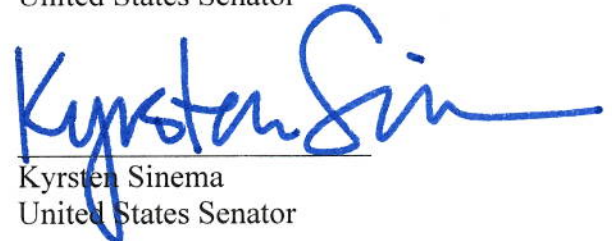
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



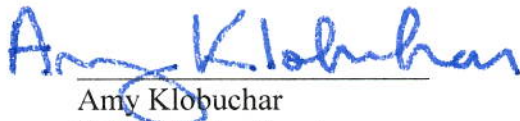
Thom Tillis
United States Senator



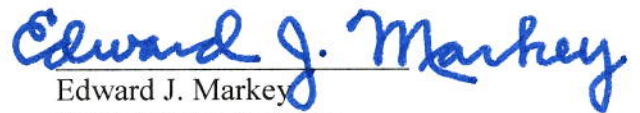
Tina Smith
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Labor and Health and Human Services Group Letter Table
LHHS_Durbin_Group_190415-124942[LetterID 1048]

ID	Request Project Location	Request Project Name
9749	[Title II]/[HHS]/[Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)]/[Rural Health Programs]	Rural Health Programs/SIREN Act

Appropriations Request Database

Request ID: 9749			
Project Location:	[Title II]/[HHS]/[Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)]/[Rural Health Programs]	Project Name:	Rural Health Programs/SIREN Act
Member/s:	Durbin, Richard(D-IL); Baldwin, Tammy(D-WI); Collins, Susan(R-ME); Cramer, Kevin(R-ND); Gillibrand, Kirsten(D-NY); Klobuchar, Amy(D-MN); Markey, Edward(D-MA); McSally, Martha(R-AZ); Roberts, Pat(R-KS); Sanders, Bernard(I-VT); Sinema, Kyrsten(D-AZ); Smith, Tina(D-MN); Stabenow, Debbie(D-MI); Tester, Jon(D-MT); Tillis, Thom(R-NC); Wyden, Ron(D-OR)	Subcommittee:	LHHS
Request Type:	Group	Staff Contact:	Max Kanner Max_Kanner@durbin.senate.gov 202-228-5748
Justification:	The 2018 Farm Bill (P.L. 115-334) included the SIREN Act, which reauthorized HRSA's Rural EMS Training and Equipment grant program to support rural fire and EMS agencies in purchasing equipment (everything from naloxone and first aid kits to power stretchers or new ambulances) and recruiting, retaining, and training staff members. This HRSA grant program has not received appropriations since FY05. Across rural America, small fire and EMS agencies are often the only health care providers and face challenges in personnel recruitment and retention, and securing expensive equipment—all while serving an older, sicker, and poorer population; confronting geographic barriers and low reimbursement rates; and addressing the opioid crisis.		
Proposed Bill Language:		Proposed Report Language:	
Member's Request:	\$0	Member's Request (text):	substantial new appropriations
Enacted Level:	\$0	President's Request:	\$0
Intended Country:			