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### **Trump budget decimates rural health safety net**

“At a time when rural hospital closures are escalating, and one in three rural hospitals is in financial risk of closing, President Trump’s budget delivers a fatal blow to the rural health care safety net,” said Alan Morgan, CEO of the National Rural Health Association. Catastrophic cuts to the rural health safety net include:

- Elimination Rural Hospital Flex Grants;
- Drastic cuts in Rural Hospital Outreach Grants;
- Elimination of State Offices of Rural;
- Elimination of Rural Telehealth funding;
- Drastic cuts in Rural Health Policy Development;
- Devastating \$1.4 trillion in cuts to Medicaid over 10 years;
- Drastic cuts in mental health funding; and
- Drastic cuts to core **public health programs that focus on disease surveillance, health research, emergency preparedness, and chronic disease prevention.**

This ill-conceived and short-sighted budget, if acted upon, will mean the difference between life and death for both rural patients and rural economies. These programs create access to life-saving health care for some of the neediest populations in the nation. Rural populations are, per capita, older, poorer and sicker than other populations and their health outcomes are worsening. A January 2017 CDC study indicates that “the death rate gap between urban and rural America is getting wider” and rates of the five leading causes of death are higher among rural Americans.

Additionally, the economic vitality of rural communities will suffer an overwhelming blow. A rural hospital and rural health delivery is often the largest or second largest employer in a rural community and as much as 20% of the local rural economy. Rural America has not recovered from the Great Recession of 2008. Ninety percent of the jobs that have returned have been in urban, not rural communities, and the most recent employment numbers still show that rural employment is far below where it was pre-recession.

“At a time when the nation should be working to help the health and economic vitality of rural America, this budget does the exact opposite,” said Morgan.