



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

TERRI A. SEWELL
ALABAMA, 7TH DISTRICT

February 27, 2020

The Honorable Alex M. Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Secretary Azar:

As Representative of Alabama's 7th Congressional District, I write to request immediate hardship assistance for Pickens County Medical Center (Provider #: 01-0109). Pickens County Medical Center is a 56-bed short-term acute care hospital in Carrollton, Alabama. It is a healthcare authority owned by the county and is the only hospital in Pickens County, where 23 percent of the population lives in poverty.

Hospital officials have informed my office that the hospital does not have the resources to make payroll this month and that they will not be able to provide services to patients as soon as Monday, March 2nd.

I believe a Critical Access Hospital designation would be appropriate for Pickens County. The current hospital is located more than 35 miles from all surrounding hospitals.

- Distance to Fayette Medical Center, Fayette, Alabama – 38 miles, 40.4 miles (secondary)
- Distance to Greene County Hospital, Eutaw, Alabama – 38.8 miles, 43.7 miles (secondary)
- Distance to DCH Regional Medical Center, Tuscaloosa, Alabama – 38.7 miles
- Distance to Noxubee General Hospital, Macon, Mississippi – 39.8 miles, 41.3 miles (secondary)

We are immensely grateful to Administrator Verma for honoring the request made by me and my colleagues in the Alabama delegation to fix the flawed Area Wage Index formula. Our hospitals are in much better standing today because of the changes she made in the FY2020 final OPSS rule.

Unfortunately, Pickens County Medical Center is the single hospital in the 7th Congressional District that will not receive a larger increase as a result of the change. Therefore, I believe a Critical Access Hospital (CAH) designation would be the most appropriate path forward for hospital services in Pickens County.

I would like to meet with you in-person to discuss the continuing hardships faced by rural hospitals in Alabama's 7th Congressional District and the need for immediate relief, payment reform, and risk mitigation, most imminently with Pickens County Medical Center. I hope that CMS can make a swift decision on a Critical Access Hospital designation in Pickens County, where the need is dire.

Thank you for your attention to this request. My Legislative Director, Hillary Beard, will be in touch with your staff to provide more details about the hospital and to schedule our meeting. She can be reached at Hillary.B Beard@mail.house.gov or 202.225.2665.

Sincerely,



Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress (AL-07)

CC: Seema Verma, Administrator, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services