



**Kansas Hospital
ASSOCIATION**

TO: House Health and Human Services

FROM: Tara Mays, Vice President State Legislative Relations
Jennifer Findley, Vice President Education and Special Projects

DATE: February 6, 2024

RE: House Bill 2637

The Kansas Hospital Association appreciates the opportunity to provide comments in support of HB 2637. This legislation expands the eligibility of the Rural Emergency Hospital eligibility to hospitals that meet criteria at any point after 2015. This will allow more Kansas communities to take advantage of the possibility of converting to an REH model.

As a reminder, the Rural Emergency Hospital model provides ambulatory, initial assessment and interventional services. The REH is open to the community every day of the year to provide the consistent service array most needed by the community. REHs can provide emergency services, outpatient surgeries, outpatient services, primary care and other services as determined by the facility and the community that the hospital serves.

Currently, to be eligible to participate in the REH model, a hospital must currently be a Critical Access Hospital or a Prospective Payment System Hospital with less than 50 beds in a rural designated area.

On February 16, 2021 KHA appeared before this committee to testify in support of House Bill 2261 to establish this program. During the discussions this committee flagged the need to include additional facilities that may have previously closed.

This legislation would open the door for those hospitals that have closed since 2015 to re-open as a REH. This legislation doesn't force any hospitals towards the newly established model and doesn't prevent them from changing to other designations in the future.

Hospitals were eligible for conversion as of January 2023, currently there are 19 REHs across the country. We have one approved Rural Emergency Hospitals in Kansas and another one in the final stages of approval. Additionally, we understand other communities across Kansas have also begun exploring if the model is the right fit for them.

The federal government is also exploring an expansion of the Rural Emergency Hospital program. U.S. Senator Jerry Moran has introduced a mirror extension of this legislation. This bill ensures Kansas will be ready to take advantage of any new flexibilities provided at the Federal level.

The health care delivery system in rural communities are a tremendous asset to Kansas, the communities they support, and the individual patients they serve. KHA and our member hospitals are committed to working on efforts that provide flexibility to rural hospitals as well as opportunities to implement alternative rural health models that sustain health care services in rural communities.

We appreciate the opportunity to share with the committee our thoughts on this important legislations and urge your support of HB 2637.