



March 16, 2015

Testimony in support of HF 1447 before the House Health and Human Services Reform Committee

Dear Chairwoman Mack, Representative Kiel and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to address HF 1447. The Minnesota Rural Health Association (MRHA) represents dozens of rural hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, providers, medical educators and others among its members. MRHA is a non-profit membership organization and Minnesota's designated State Rural Health Association. We work in close collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Health, Office of Rural Health and Primary Care. Our mission is to strengthen health and healthcare in Greater Minnesota through education, collaboration and advocacy.

The MRHA applauds and supports HF1447 which provides several important initiatives to address Minnesota's growing health care workforce shortages particularly in underserved areas including our rural communities. This bill:

- Establishes a Legislative Health Care Workforce Council
- Expands the state's grant program for more clinical training of Advance Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs), physician assistants and mental health professionals
- Establishes a new grant program to expand primary care residency training
- Provides new incentives for health professions student preceptors and medical resident preceptors

Minnesota's rural residents are experiencing severe shortages among many healthcare providers, particularly in primary care, mental health, dental care, obstetrics and several medical specialties. Minnesota needs a concerted effort to address these shortages, or risk sentencing rural residents to sub-standard health care and access. Because these shortages most severely impact rural communities, MRHA would like to see language incorporated specifying that five members of the new Council must represent health care employers or education institutions outside the seven-county metropolitan area.

The MRHA appreciates the opportunity to testify on HF1447. We look forward to working with Representative Kiel to strengthen and pass this legislation which is important for rural healthcare and rural Minnesotans.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Gottwalt
Executive Director
Minnesota Rural Health Association