



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

November 3, 2025

Dr. Mehmet Oz, Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Dr. Mehmet Oz:

I write to express my strong support and endorsement of Wisconsin's Rural Health Transformation Plan, submitted with this letter. Having grown up in Plymouth, Wisconsin (population 8,932 as of the last U.S. Census), I know firsthand the immense strength of our rural communities as well as the unique economic and demographic challenges our rural communities face. My administration's proposed plan will empower the right providers, harness the right technology, and support the right professional networks, to improve the health and wellbeing of Wisconsinites in rural communities across our state.

- **Benefit to Rural Residents.** The application includes \$1 billion of funding across three initiatives: Rural Talent Recruitment and Retention, Interoperability Infrastructure and Modernization, and Population Health Infrastructure. Initiatives will focus on expanding rural capacity, improving sustainability, and investing in innovation. **\$944 million (94%) will be invested in rural communities.**
 - **Rural Talent Recruitment and Retention (Strengthen the Workforce) - \$337 million.** Rural Wisconsin does not have enough health care workers. This makes accessing high-quality and timely care difficult for residents. Wisconsin will launch innovative workforce projects in rural communities, support career pathways for rural health care providers, and reimburse for community-focused services.
 - **Interoperability Infrastructure and Modernization (Expand and Enhance Digital Capabilities) - \$329 million.** Rural Wisconsin risks missing out on technological advancements, such as closed-loop referral systems and telehealth capabilities. Wisconsin will invest in a digital rural health care collaborative and allocate funds to rural providers to upgrade systems and infrastructure.
 - **Population Health Infrastructure (Improve Care Delivery Through Partnerships) - \$279 million.** Fragmented systems of care in rural areas prevent coordination across primary care, behavioral health, and social supports in the community. Wisconsin DHS will stand up a competitive grant program for regional coalitions in rural areas to create coordinated systems of care across multiple partners. To receive funds, the regional coalitions will have to demonstrate multi-sector partnerships and a clear path to sustainability for any proposed work. Each tribal Nation will receive \$500,000 per year to pursue RHT program goals.
 - **Administration and Evaluation - \$55 million.** Administering this program will be a massive undertaking, with multiple grant programs to administer, new systems to stand up and administer, and multiple partner relationships to manage. Qualified staff will ensure funds are spent effectively, efficiently, and transparently. Wisconsin will partner with academic institutions to evaluate the impact of the program.

- **Lead Agency Designation.** I have designated the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) as the lead agency responsible for this program. Under state statute, DHS authority includes Medicaid, public health, behavioral health, and regulation of our hospital and long-term care sectors.
- **Partner Consultation and Engagement.** I certify that the State health agency developed this application in collaboration with Medicaid, the Wisconsin Office of Rural Health, local and tribal governments, tribal health directors, and an extensive list of other stakeholders identified in the planning process.
 - Wisconsin solicited a request for information and received over 170 responses from hospitals and health systems, local and tribal governments, health care vendors, tech companies, educational institutions, and associations. Wisconsin's health agency reviewed each proposal and met with over one dozen partners to further develop these ideas for our rural health transformation plan.
 - Respondents were asked which of the 10 CMS allowable activities the state should address in the plan. The majority (93 responses) focused on technology-enabled solutions to improve efficiency, enhance cybersecurity capacity, and improve care delivery and health outcomes. Other priorities included workforce development, behavioral health innovations, and infrastructure investments.
 - Stakeholders also identified key challenges with our rural health care system. Themes included low patient volume, reliance on public payers (Medicaid and Medicare), geographic and digital isolation, and workforce challenges.
 - Wisconsin will continue to engage stakeholders throughout the development and implementation of the program through formal and informal consultations, including an advisory group to ensure transparency and accountability.
- **State-Level Actions.** State-level actions that will ensure success include collaboration across agencies and regulatory changes to Medicaid implemented through state plan amendments and contracts. Medicaid will invest in community health worker services and coverage for dual eligible individuals to sustain investments in improved health services. The plan leverages the expertise and rural connections of state agencies, including the Departments of Administration; Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection; Workforce Development; the University of Wisconsin – System; the Wisconsin Technical College System; and others to support program administration.
- **Prohibited Use of Funds.** I certify that Wisconsin will not spend any award funds on activities prohibited under 42 U.S.C. 1396ee(h)(2)(ii) related to intergovernmental transfers, certified public expenditures, or any other expenditure to finance the non-Federal share of expenditures required under any provision of law.

Wisconsin stands ready to execute on the initiatives described in the application and continue our ongoing work to improve the health of rural Wisconsin.

Respectfully submitted,



Tony Evers
Governor