



February 3, 2015

Testimony in support of HF 211 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 211. 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 HF211 which expands Minnesota's existing health professional education loan forgiveness program, extending it to rural:

- mental health professionals
- public health nurses
- dental therapists
- advanced dental therapists, and
- nurses in rural hospitals if at least half their time is spent working in a nursing home owned and operated by the hospital

While Minnesota's rural residents are experiencing shortages among many healthcare professions, **access to mental health, public health nursing, dental care and nursing home providers is particularly critical.** The state's education loan forgiveness program, which is administered by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), has proven effective in encouraging more new healthcare professionals to serve rural communities. This bill does not solve all rural healthcare workforce challenges, but it is an important step in the right direction.

The MRHA appreciates the opportunity to testify on HF211. 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,

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Executive Director
Minnesota Rural Health Association