

PROTECT ACCESS TO RURAL HEALTH CARE

The Role of Rural Hospitals

Rural hospitals are licensed acute care hospitals that have 100 or fewer beds and an emergency room, including those in counties with low population density, sole community hospitals, critical access hospitals, and more. There are 27 rural hospitals in Florida that support over 1100 beds and employ over 5,000 Floridians. Rural hospitals provide much-needed care close to home.

Proposed Legislation: Rural Emergency Hospitals (HB 309 / SB 644)

Given their unique constraints, rural hospitals and health systems often need to be resourceful in pursuing opportunities that improve financial stability and viability. Nationally, there have been 136 rural hospitals and health systems that have closed from 2010 to 2021.

To address the growing concern over closures of rural hospitals, a new Medicare provider type was included in the federal Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021 (CAA) and it allows Medicare-enrolled REHs to deliver emergency hospital, observation, and other services to Medicare patients on an outpatient basis



HB 309 & SB 644 would pave the way in Florida statute to allow a struggling rural hospital the option to convert to this license type. Support these bills to preserve access to care in rural communities

Rural Hospital Capital Improvement (FY 2024–2025 State Budget)

Funding to modernize and harden rural hospital facilities in a systematic and equitable way that will strengthen Florida's entire healthcare network.

\$10 million recurring to the rural hospital capital improvement grant program

It is critical that Florida's rural hospitals have the resources to utilize quality technology, equipment, and facilities to provide the highest level of care to their communities. **FHA has surveyed all rural hospitals and found an additional \$15 million in needs for 2024.**

In 1999, the Legislature created the Rural Hospital Capital Improvement Grant Program through the Florida Department of Health. Subject to legislative appropriation applicants can receive funding for projects to upgrade and harden their facilities. Between 1999 and 2008, DOH awarded \$34.45 million in grants under the program. **FHA thanks the Florida legislature for providing \$10 Million to 19 hospital applicants in 2023.**

Support Rural Hospitals by funding \$10 million to the Rural Hospital Capital Improvement Grant Program



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