

Letter to the Secretary: June 2-4, 2008, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

July 1, 2008

The Honorable Michael M. Leavitt, Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Leavitt,

I would like to share with you some of the highlights from our most recent field meeting in Chapel Hill, North Carolina from June 2-4, 2008. As you know, each year, the Committee conducts two field meetings, to speak with local rural health and human services experts, in order to inform the Committee's Annual Report.

The Committee visited Chapel Hill to learn more about issues related to the 2009 Report topics of creating viable medical homes, workforce and community development, and serving at-risk children in rural areas. The meeting was quite informative, with health and human service experts from across the State taking time to meet with the Committee to discuss the issues facing their communities, as they pertain to the 2009 Report.

The site visits also afforded Committee members a chance to visit three rural communities. The Medical Homes Subcommittee visited a Medicaid demonstration network site that implemented medical home principles in Greenville, NC. The Workforce and Community Development Subcommittee traveled to Rocky Mount, NC and visited two partner sites in the Turning Point Allied Health Regional Skills Partnership, part of a State-wide workforce initiative focused on allied health professions. The Serving At-Risk Children Subcommittee toured Siler City, NC and met with representatives from a variety of programs for children, including the NC Smart Start Initiative. Findings from the field meeting and the site visits will be shared with you in the 2009 Report.

In addition, our visit to North Carolina affirmed the critical need to improve coordination among Federal programs by creating an inter-departmental rural working group for cross-program collaboration, as outlined in the pending 2008 Report.

Within the next several months, the Committee will work to finalize a draft of the 2009 Report chapters. Our next field meeting is to be held in Brainerd, Minnesota, from September 24-26, 2008.

Thank you again for your support of this Committee and your support of rural America.

Sincerely,

David M. Beasley
Chair