

# Letter to the Secretary: September 9-11, 2009, Sacramento, California

October 20, 2009

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

Dear Secretary Sebelius,

I would like to share with you some of the highlights from our most recent field meeting in Sacramento, CA from September 9-11, 2009. This was the second of the two yearly field meetings of the Committee, which provide an opportunity for members to speak with local rural health and human services experts and informs the annual Report we prepare for you.

In Sacramento, the Committee learned how the 2010 Report topics: health care provider integration, rural primary care provider workforce, and home and community based care for seniors are being addressed in rural America. The meeting was informative, with health and human service experts from across the State taking time to discuss the issues facing their rural areas. The site visits afforded members a chance to visit rural communities and discuss the topics at a local level. We look forward to providing you with more information from the field meeting and the site visits in the 2010 Report.

The Health Care Integration Subcommittee visited Sutter Amador Hospital in Jackson, California, a community-based, not-for-profit hospital which provides a full continuum of acute inpatient and outpatient services for the 45,000 residents in the area. The Subcommittee heard about opportunities Sutter Amador created by coordinating care with sister facilities, but also heard about challenges faced in the recruitment of practitioners. The Subcommittee went on to visit one of the Sutter Health eICU Hubs, a facility that provides Intensivist monitoring of patients and specialist services to rural hospitals via video and sound, and extensive displays of vital medical information showing current status and trends over time.

The Rural Primary Care Provider Workforce Subcommittee visited Sutter Amador Hospital and Pioneer Health Center to hear about rural recruitment and retention issues. Pioneer Health Center is one of Sutter Amador's family practice locations and provides care in a Primary Care

Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). The Subcommittee learned about unique workforce challenges affecting rural California.

The Home and Community Based Care for Rural Seniors Subcommittee met with a variety of representatives from three different Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and key organizations that provide home and community based care services. Rural factors that impede service delivery were presented, along with recommendations for solutions.

Our Committee looks forward to working with you and under your guidance. The next Committee meeting will take place at the Sofitel in Washington, D.C. from February 17-19, 2010. We know your time is limited given the push for health reform but we hope that if you can not participate you will designate one of your staff to join us for the meeting. In addition, we would welcome having a conference call with you, or one of your staff, to better learn how we can best serve you and meet the charge of advising you on rural health and human service issues. We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you again for your leadership, your support of this Committee, and your support of rural America.

Sincerely,

David M. Beasley  
Chair