

Letter to the Secretary: February 4-6, 2001, Washington, D.C.

April 30, 2001

The Honorable Tommy G. Thompson
Secretary
Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Thompson,

In a follow up to our conversation in February, I am sending you a new report on the rural implications of Medicare reform from the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health. This report culminates a year of work by the Committee and it is my hope that it will serve to as a useful resource as you examine ways to strengthen, improve and modernize the Medicare program.

The Committee believes it is important that a rural voice be heard during the ongoing discussions about how to reform Medicare to ensure that rural beneficiaries have access to high-quality care regardless of where they live. The report represents a more global perspective on key rural Medicare issues that the Committee believes should be considered. It is my hope that this report, as well as the June report on key rural issues from the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, will bring a renewed focus to these important issues.

As you know, the Committee is here to serve you. We meet three times a year, once in Washington and twice in the field. Each year, the Committee produces a report on a key rural health issue. In 1999, the Committee focused on the rural public health infrastructure. In 2001, the Committee will examine key issues facing the rural health safety net.

I have taken the liberty of including a copy of the public health report in this mailing. We would also be happy to discuss with you how our 2001 report might best be focused to meet your needs.

Since 1987, this Committee has strived to be a valuable resource for the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. The Committee boasts a wealth of rural health

expertise and over the past 10 years has produced an extensive list of recommendations on key policy issues.

We look forward to working with you during your tenure in Washington and it is my hope that you might be able to meet with us during our February 2002 meeting in Washington. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

Nancy K. Kassebaum Baker