

May 24, 2021

The Honorable Tina Smith
United States Senate
720 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Smith and Murkowski:

On behalf of our nearly 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, our clinician partners – including more than 270,000 affiliated physicians, 2 million nurses and other caregivers – and the 43,000 health care leaders who belong to our professional membership groups, the American Hospital Association (AHA) writes to express support for your legislation, S. 1491, the Rural Maternal and Obstetric Modernization of Services Act.

Maternal health is a top priority for the AHA and our member hospitals and health systems. The causes for the escalating rates of maternal mortality are complex, including a lack of consistent access to comprehensive care and persistent racial disparities in health and health care. We also recognize the need for improvements in health outcomes for women giving birth in rural areas. A May 10 [report](#) released by the Government Accountability Office found that deaths during pregnancy or up to one year postpartum due to pregnancy-related causes are higher in rural areas compared to metropolitan areas and called for additional efforts to assess program data for rural and underserved parts of the country.

Your legislation would help hospitals and health systems improve maternal health in rural areas by authorizing grants to: implement obstetric networks; maternal telehealth programs that will provide support for the entire pregnancy and postpartum period, as well as funds to purchase pregnancy-related technology, such as ultrasound machines; a maternal care training demonstration for providers in rural settings; and improvements to rural obstetric care data collection at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, with a focus on coordinating work on maternal mortality and morbidity and reporting on women's health outcomes on the basis of socioeconomic and geographic factors.

The AHA commends you for your commitment to improve maternal health. We look forward to working with you to advance S. 1491.

Sincerely,

/s/

Stacey Hughes
Executive Vice President

