

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 211 Session of
2022

INTRODUCED BY BURNS, DRISCOLL, GUENST, SANCHEZ, LONGIETTI,
MADDEN, HILL-EVANS, HENNESSEY, HOWARD, BRADFORD AND STRUZZI,
JUNE 8, 2022

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, JUNE 8, 2022

A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Center for Rural Pennsylvania to conduct a study
2 on the current level of health care access in rural counties
3 and municipalities, as well as the challenges faced in the
4 home-based primary care industry, the telehealth service
5 industry and the community health workers industry within
6 this Commonwealth.

7 WHEREAS, The Center for Rural Pennsylvania has identified 48
8 of the 67 counties in Pennsylvania as rural counties; and

9 WHEREAS, Rural counties have seen a significant decrease in
10 population over the last 10 years as compared to urban counties;
11 and

12 WHEREAS, Rural counties and municipalities have historically
13 experienced a lack of access to health services compared to
14 urban areas, such as in the number of hospice care and emergency
15 medical service providers, and that lack of access is
16 exacerbated when population totals decrease within these areas;
17 and

18 WHEREAS, The lack of health care access in rural counties
19 places an undue burden on rural residents, such as an increased

1 mortality rate from heart disease, cancer and other chronic
2 illnesses, as well as shorter life expectancies; and

3 WHEREAS, The number of doctors practicing in rural counties
4 has been continuously outpaced by urban areas, leaving more and
5 more residents to travel further distances for care, and this
6 situation has caused the Department of Health to label 62
7 counties as having "health professional shortage areas" in
8 primary care; and

9 WHEREAS, There have been a multitude of innovative ways to
10 increase health care access to rural areas as seen through home-
11 based primary care, telehealth and community health workers; and

12 WHEREAS, Home-based primary care is a form of medical care in
13 which a patient is serviced predominantly within the patient's
14 own home, which has experienced a wide degree of success in both
15 Pennsylvania and across the United States; and

16 WHEREAS, Within Pennsylvania, home-based primary care
17 organizations have been able to help thousands of patients with
18 access to a variety of services; and

19 WHEREAS, Home-based primary care programs operated by
20 entities, such as the United States Medical Management and the
21 Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, consistently prove
22 home-based primary care to be a cost-saving program that
23 increases quality of service to patients; and

24 WHEREAS, The Commonwealth currently provides home-based and
25 community-based services to individuals covered by medical
26 assistance; and

27 WHEREAS, A proven method of increasing care to individuals
28 with chronic illnesses and reducing costs for patients,
29 telehealth has the ability to increase health care access to
30 residents in rural counties and municipalities; and

1 WHEREAS, Telehealth services are not regulated by the
2 Commonwealth, causing insurance companies to pick and choose
3 which services can be covered and decreasing the overall number
4 of telehealth services offered; and

5 WHEREAS, Legislation has been introduced in the past to
6 establish guidelines for telehealth services but has not been
7 enacted into law; and

8 WHEREAS, The Commonwealth has an obligation to establish
9 meaningful regulations to assist the growth of telehealth
10 services; and

11 WHEREAS, Community health workers are community members in
12 rural counties and municipalities that work either for pay or as
13 volunteers in association with local physical health and mental
14 health care systems, and they operate alongside health care
15 systems and offer services that range from care for the elderly
16 to care for infants and children; and

17 WHEREAS, There is a significant level of variance across
18 health systems in the certification and educational requirements
19 for community health workers in Pennsylvania, as they are
20 trained exclusively to the standards set by each individual
21 health care system; and

22 WHEREAS, The Commonwealth has an obligation to support the
23 increase of health care access to rural counties and
24 municipalities through an informed decision-making process;
25 therefore be it

26 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives direct the Center
27 for Rural Pennsylvania to conduct a study on the current level
28 of health care access in rural counties and municipalities, as
29 well as the challenges faced in the home-based primary care
30 industry, the telehealth service industry and community health

workers industry within this Commonwealth; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Center for Rural Pennsylvania coordinate with an agency deemed appropriate to conduct the study, including the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, the Department of Health, the Department of Human Services and the Department of Community and Economic Development; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Center for Rural Pennsylvania prepare a report of its findings that, at a minimum:

(1) identifies the factors that contribute to health care access in rural counties and municipalities and determines the level of health care access in each rural county;

(2) determines the challenges to increasing health care access to rural counties and municipalities;

(3) identifies current providers of home-based primary care, telehealth services and community health workers in this Commonwealth and determines the challenges faced by each industry;

(4) determines what resources are needed by each type of provider to increase health care access in rural counties; and

(5) includes recommendations regarding:

(i) how to best support rural counties and municipalities in increasing health care access;

(ii) how to best support telehealth services, home-based primary care services and community health workers in increasing health care access; and

(iii) other solutions to better increase health care access in rural counties and municipalities;

1 and be it further

2 RESOLVED, That the Center for Rural Pennsylvania submit its
3 report to the House of Representatives no later than one year
4 after the adoption of this resolution.