



COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Andy Beshear
GOVERNOR

Kentucky State Office Building
501 High Street
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601
Phone: (502) 564-2611
Fax: (502) 564-2517

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The Honorable Andy Barr
Representative (KY-06)
United States House of Representatives
2430 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Barr:

I write in response to your August 25 letter about your support for President Trump's "Big Ugly Bill," which experts predict will result in Kentucky losing \$21 billion in Medicaid funding over ten years, strip 250,000 Kentuckians of their health insurance, and endanger the livelihoods of 20,000 healthcare workers.

As has been widely reported, the Big Ugly Bill will gut Kentucky's rural hospitals, too. The bill will result in \$21 billion fewer dollars running through our healthcare system. While these cuts will be difficult for Medicaid providers across Kentucky, the pain will be felt primarily by hospitals and healthcare providers in our rural communities that operate on the smallest of margins and rely on this crucial funding to keep their services running and employees paid.

If you don't believe me, ask the Kentucky Hospital Association (KHA). KHA has been clear in its warnings about the impact of President Trump's Big Ugly Bill in Kentucky, predicting the Commonwealth may face the largest number of rural hospital closures in the country. Again, not my words – words from the nonprofit organization that represents the hospitals themselves.

Unsurprisingly, the people who voted for the Big Ugly Bill delayed the Medicaid cuts and work requirements until after the midterm elections, so the full effects of the bill may not be felt until later. Once the bill's requirements are in place, experts believe it will cause thousands of Kentuckians to lose their healthcare coverage, create a workforce shortage, and irreparably damage our rural health system. This will harm the health and wellbeing of our families.

As for the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP), my administration secured more than \$212 million this year to address some of Kentucky's toughest rural

healthcare challenges, such as maternal health, oral hygiene, emergency services, and behavioral health. These are challenges that are only expected to worsen because of Trump's devastating Medicaid cuts over the next decade. If Kentucky is successful in securing similar funding over the remaining four years of the RHTP, that would amount to just over \$1 billion dollars over five years. Unfortunately, compared to the size and scope of the cuts you supported in the Big Ugly Bill, this \$1 billion is a drop in the bucket.

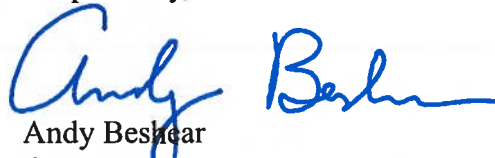
When the RHTP was announced, Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Dr. Mehmet Oz stated in an op-ed that these dollars cannot be used to fund struggling hospitals. They put it in even starker terms: "Throwing money at struggling hospital operations is like a Band-Aid on a severed artery, leaving a broken system in place."

HHS and CMS also put out guidelines saying that we cannot use RHTP funding for services already covered by insurance or other funding sources, and that we cannot use more than 15 percent of RHTP funding to pay for clinician salaries or related items. These guidelines severely restrict our ability to use RHTP funding to help shield rural hospitals from the devastating cuts in the Big Ugly Bill. My administration worked closely with healthcare leaders in rural Kentucky to develop a community-driven RHTP plan. From that moment, we've been very clear that while we know this program will not offer a solution to the Big Ugly Bill's devastating Medicaid cuts, every dollar counts when it comes to doing what we can to support rural health. Especially at a time when our federal government is failing to do this.

Throughout my time in office, I have fought to protect Kentuckians' access to healthcare, while you have stood with the President to rip it away. Time and again, you have put the interests of your party above the people you are supposed to serve. Thanks to the bill you supported, Kentucky hospitals will close, rural economies will suffer, and Kentuckians will have to drive farther for general services and emergency care, putting their lives at risk.

There is still time to undo the damage you have caused to our state's rural healthcare system and the people and communities they serve and support.

Respectfully,


Andy Beshear
Governor