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**Statement by Rep. Earl Pomeroy (D-ND)
H.R. 5118 - Medicare Rural Health Provider and Payment Extension Act**

As one of the most rural states in the country North Dakota has many miles of road and lots of open space. North Dakotans are rarely cowed by the weather and will travel miles to pick up the mail, buy groceries or go to the doctor.

Those extra miles add up in terms of health care costs. That's why we're here today to once again, push for a fair deal for rural Americans.

I am proud to be co-chair of the Rural Health Care Coalition; it provides a powerful voice to rural America in Congress. Whereas North Dakota has only one vote in the House, when we stand together with the more than 180 members of the RHCC, we are a formidable force that cannot be overlooked.

The legislation we are introducing, H.R. 5118, extends provisions from the Medicare Modernization Act that were put into place to level the playing field. The Medicare Rural Health Provider Payment Extension Act will extend current Medicare reimbursement relief for rural hospitals, doctors, home health care providers and ambulance services.

This isn't about padding the bottom line of hospitals. This is about giving them fair treatment so they can keep their doors open. These are the people that provide care to seniors yet they weren't being paid enough by Medicare to even break even.

Somewhere along the line, Medicare came to the inaccurate conclusion that it is cheaper to provide medical care in North Dakota and other places in rural America. That's not the case. Real estate may not be as inexpensive in Linton, North Dakota as New York City but ambulances do not travel sixty miles to get patients to the hospital in New York City.

We're not asking for our hospitals to make money – we're asking for changes so they can keep their doors open.

Like many rural states, North Dakota has a larger than average senior population- increasing the number of hospital patients covered by Medicare and making the impact of these changes even greater. Not extending the equitable reimbursement provisions will have catastrophic impact on the health care available to rural Americans.

Whether its Trinity Hospital in Minot or the Jamestown Hospital these changes to Medicare Reimbursements have made a difference.