

Holton Hospital CEO Testifies In Washington

(KNZA)--The CEO of Holton Community Hospital traveled to Washington D.C., providing testimony this week regarding the affects of Medicare on rural healthcare.

According to a press release from the office of Republican U.S. Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins, Carrie Saia on Tuesday testified before a Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health, providing her perspective, and concerns, pertaining to rural healthcare disparities created by Medicare regulations. "The increasingly burdensome federal regulations that are being placed on healthcare providers make it difficult to budget, plan, and adequately prepare for the future," Saia told the committee.

During her testimony, Saia called on the committee to pass legislation, introduced in part by Jenkins, that would delay implementation of the "direct supervision" requirement set to take effect this year. "This policy places additional, unnecessary, financial burden on my organization. Staffing a physician onsite, as required by the regulations, will either result in changing our organization's then profitable bottom line into a negative bottom line, or restrict the ability for us to be able to provide those services to our beneficiaries in our community."

In 2009, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services issued the policy which requires a supervising physician to be physically present in the department at all times when Medicare beneficiaries receive outpatient therapeutic services.

Saia also spoke out against the 96-hour physician certification requirement. "[It] requires a physician to certify that a beneficiary may reasonably be expected to be discharged within 96 hours after admission to the hospital. As a rural hospital administrator, I can say with certainty that the discrepancies between the condition of participation and the conditions of payment have caused nothing but confusion and challenges for critical access hospitals."

Saia called on Congress to support legislation, again introduced in part by Jenkins, that would remove the requirement.

Jenkins, a Holton native, says she is "extremely thankful" for Saia's testimony, calling the hearing "an important step forward to address the problems that providers and patients face in rural America."

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