

HAPPY NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH DAY!

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH AND
PRIMARY CARE, ZORA RADOSEVICH



National Rural Health Day gives us a wonderful opportunity each year to pause and reflect and recognize the people who do so much to maintain, sustain and improve health in our rural communities. We celebrate the healthcare providers, communities, organizations and individuals who work hard every day to make quality, accessible health care available to rural Minnesotans.

As Director of the Office of Rural Health and Primary Care in the Minnesota Department of Health, I am fortunate to work with a great team on a wide range of activities and programs to help ensure that all communities and Minnesotans thrive. We work with partners across the state to develop, support and implement policies and strategies designed to optimize access to health for all rural and underserved populations.

Today we express our appreciation for everyone who contributes to building the vibrant, vital rural communities that Minnesotans deserve. We recognize that many of Minnesota's rural communities *are* facing challenges. And we pledge to continue to work with you to address those challenges and find the opportunities within them. We have made a strong commitment to working with Minnesota's communities, educational institutions and health care organizations to build on successful programs and find new ways to expand the health care workforce and strengthen the pipeline to rural practice.

National Rural Health Day is a good time to take stock of some of the initiatives undertaken in building this pipeline. Initiatives we are proud to support include:

- Creation of rural residency tracks and new opportunities for rural rotations for students in a variety of health care education and training programs. We know that providers tend to practice close to where they did their training, so we are working hard to make sure rural training is a key component of health care education.
- Working with the University of Minnesota and Minnesota State Healthforce on a legislative request to develop a draft proposal to create a statewide Healthcare Workforce Advisory Council. We are taking comments on the draft through Monday, November 25, and welcome hearing your thoughts. Please feel free to respond to the

survey that can be found at:

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/ruralhealth/wfcfeedback.html>.

- Providing support for international medical graduates so they can make use of their medical education and skills in their new home country and state.
- Administering an expanded loan forgiveness program for providers who commit to serving in rural and underserved communities.
- Conducting research on the healthcare workforce to identify trends and better understand the drivers of change.

We thank our many advisory committee members who share their wisdom and experience with us. Our partnership with you helps us identify and call attention to the needs *and* best practices that work for rural Minnesota. These members serve on the Rural Health Advisory Committee, the State Trauma Advisory Council, The Health Care Workforce and Education Committee, the Rural Hospital Flexibility Program Advisory Committee, and the Immigrant International Medical Graduates Committee. And we thank the many more informal partners who work with us every day.

Our role is to help identify and call attention to the needs, help develop policies and administer programs to address these needs. Our partnership with you helps make this happen.

Happy National Rural Health Day!

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