



The Speaker's Select Committee on Advancing Rural and Small-Town Health Care

Virginia Rural Health Association

Rural Health Voice Conference

November 20, 2024

Impetus for Action

- Speaker Don Scott visited Southwest Virginia at the invitation of Senator Travis Hackworth and saw firsthand the health care disparities.
- Particularly alarmed by the closure of rural hospitals around the state and lack of healthcare providers in those areas.
- First action as Speaker was to create this select committee.
- Bipartisan and led by members of the House HHS Committee.

A Road Trip Across Virginia



- The committee held a series of meetings across Virginia
 - Tazewell County (southwest), Prince Edward County (southside), and Accomack County (Eastern Shore).
- In addition to holding public meetings for presentations, toured hospitals, free clinics, and FQHCs.
- Participated in the Black Maternal Health Legislative Summit and the rural health care roundtable.
- Preparing actionable recommendations to present to the Speaker in December.

Actionable Recommendations

- Recommendations categorized into six areas:
 - Health Workforce, Maternal Health, Obesity, Transportation, Telehealth, Dental Care
- Not ignoring other areas (mental health, substance abuse, heart disease) but needed to limit committee's scope.
- Some proposals to help rural areas will have statewide impact.
- Proposing legislation, budget amendment, or both for each recommendation.
- May be introduced in 2025 or subsequent sessions.

Examples

- Invest in Grow Your Own initiatives and expand the healthcare talent pipeline by replicating the Blue Ridge Partnership.
- Increase midwives' scope of practice and fund additional OB GYN residencies in rural areas.
- Decrease threshold to access to GLP-1 medications for obesity and allow patients to stay on meds.
- Fund a transportation pilot for the uninsured to access free clinics.
- Require healthcare provider reimbursement for telephone-only telehealth and invest in broadband access points (e.g., libraries, free clinics, pharmacies) for telehealth visits or mobile health clinics.
- Fund the creation of a dental and dental hygiene scholarship and loan repayment program for rural areas.