

**House Committee on Agriculture
Congress Member Day Hearing
December 10, 2025
Testimony of Rep. Lauren Underwood**

Thank you, Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Craig.

Americans across the country, and especially in rural communities, are feeling the impact of President Trump and MAGA Republicans' extreme policies.

Families are paying more for basics. Hospitals are closing. Farms are facing higher costs and more extreme weather due to man-made crises like climate change and Trump's tariffs.

And instead of strengthening our rural economies and improving affordability, Trump's Big Ugly Bill made things worse.

It cut Medicaid by nearly \$1 trillion, threatening access to life-saving care for rural communities and increasing the cost of health care for everybody. It also undermined vital conservation payments that help farmers face the dual challenges of rising costs and a changing climate.

And on top of the Big Ugly Bill, President Trump and his tariffs have created chaos for the communities that keep this country fed. The damage is obvious, and rural communities are the ones paying the price.

That's why I've introduced two bipartisan bills to undo some of the harm House Republicans have caused: the Prioritizing Rural Hospitals Act and the Strong Farms, Strong Future Act.

Together, these bills address two of the biggest challenges I hear about from farmers in my district: access to health care and affordability.

Republicans just passed the largest cut to health care in American history, and now hundreds of rural health care facilities are projected to close. When a hospital closes, families are forced to travel hours for emergency care. Preventive care plummets, and conditions worsen before people can get help. That means higher costs for families and higher costs for the entire health system.

We must act immediately to address the significant challenges people in our rural communities face in accessing quality health care.

My bill, the Prioritizing Rural Hospitals Act, would address these disparities by prioritizing funding for rural health care facilities applying for Rural Development funding through USDA.

This bill gives communities the ability to renovate outdated buildings, reopen shuttered clinics, expand telehealth, and equip providers with the tools they need to expand care.

The Prioritizing Rural Hospitals Act is a crucial step towards reversing the damage done by Trump and House Republicans when they slashed federal investment in rural health care. We need to act quickly to provide rural communities with the resources they need to ensure everybody can access care when they need it, no matter where they live.

Unfortunately, Trump and House Republicans didn't stop at cutting health care. To pay for tax cuts for the wealthy, they also stole from the conservation programs farmers rely on.

Family farms keep rural economies running, and they've been hit hard by rising costs and the financial uncertainty that comes with a changing climate.

The Big Ugly Bill undermined conservation programs that farmers rely on to manage risk, improve soil health, and stay competitive. It pulled the rug out from under farmers who were acting as good stewards of their land.

My bill, the Strong Farms, Strong Future Act, is a common-sense measure that puts farmers back on solid ground. It makes sure that when costs go up—for things like cover crop seeds, labor, and equipment—conservation payments rise with them. Finally, farmers will receive inflation-adjusted payments for implementing and strengthening climate practices on their farms.

It also builds on the Conservation Stewardship Program, so farmers who adopt or improve conservation practices can renew their contracts with ease. Plus, it expands climate-smart bundles so farmers can access region-specific bundles for different types of land.

These practices are helping farmers reduce input costs and stabilize yields. Better soil health means fewer expensive fertilizers. Better grazing systems mean healthier herds and lower feed costs. Better water retention means fewer crop losses during drought.

These bills give farmers and rural families the support they're being denied by this Administration. As Congress works toward a bipartisan Farm Bill, we cannot ignore rural hospitals or the financial pressure on family farms. Both of these bipartisan proposals should be included in a Farm Bill and brought to the House floor without delay, because rural communities need action now.

Thank you. I yield back.