

Representative John Rose (TN-06)

Member Day Testimony

House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and

Related Agencies

May 13, 2021

Chairman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to speak today about several key priorities for the Sixth Congressional District of Tennessee. It is an honor to be here, and I appreciate the hard work you do.

Access to quality emergency healthcare in rural areas is critical to ensuring that when someone suffers a life-threatening emergency they are able to be seen at an emergency room within minutes instead of hours. Unfortunately, our country is currently in the midst of a rural hospital closure epidemic. According to a December 2020 GAO report over 100 rural hospitals have closed since 2013. I am sad to report to this Subcommittee that my district has not escaped this rural healthcare disaster, as two hospitals serving rural populations recently closed.

It is hard for me to put into words the emotional gut-punch a rural hospital closure has on a community. However, the scariest part, the part that keeps me up at night, is fearing that I will wake up in the morning and find out that one of my constituents did not survive the long journey to the nearest emergency room. Unfortunately, this nightmare has become our reality.

In 2019, a constituent of mine, Jamestown resident Maria Ramirez, became unconscious and in desperate need of acute medical care. Her son, John Ramirez could not take her to the closest hospital, Jamestown Regional Medical Center. *Why?* Because of its closure in May 2019. Instead, his only option was to take his mother to her primary care clinic. Once there, the medical team did the best they could using the medial tools and services readily available. After stabilizing Ms. Ramirez, she was taken via ambulance on the long arduous journey to the next closest hospital, which happens to be more than 30 miles away in Crossville, Tennessee. Unfortunately, the hospital in Crossville was full, forcing her to be air lifted to the hospital in Cookeville where she tragically lost her life. The closure of rural hospitals, like Jamestown Regional Medical Center, results in significant loss of life and great suffering. In Mrs. Ramirez's case, had the hospital been open, more could have been done during the critical onset of her medical emergency.

Today, I come before you with a solution to this epidemic, a solution that cannot be accomplished without your assistance. The Jamestown community has been urgently trying to set up an emergency healthcare facility. The town has partnered with the University of Tennessee Medical Center in Knoxville to renovate an existing building to develop a freestanding emergency room and primary care clinic in Jamestown. I was proud to submit a Community Project Funding request to this Subcommittee on behalf of UT Medical Center to bring this freestanding emergency room and primary care clinic to fruition. The Community Project Funding request I submitted would be used for state-of-the-art equipment, revitalization, and an additional 410 square feet of new space. This is about improving a

critically deficient quality of life issue for the people of this community and the surrounding area. Today, I humbly ask for your support of this life saving project.

As a member of the Alzheimer's Task Force, I would also like to thank the Subcommittee for its past support of Alzheimer's research funding. I, like many Americans, have had close relatives affected by this life-altering disease. We owe it to ourselves and to future generations to prevent the onset of Alzheimer's, slow down its progression, and find a cure. I urge the Subcommittee to once again provide robust funding for Alzheimer's research programs.

Lastly, I would like to draw the Subcommittee's attention to a disease that is plaguing many Americans—muscular dystrophy. I was proud to join my colleagues in submitting several requests to further advance ongoing research into muscular dystrophy and I ask for the Committee's support of these requests.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and I look forward to working with the Subcommittee on these important issues.