

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 7409

To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to limit the geographic reclassification of certain hospitals under the Medicare program.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 5, 2026

Mr. TAYLOR (for himself and Mrs. MILLER of West Virginia) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means

A BILL

To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to limit the geographic reclassification of certain hospitals under the Medicare program.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Defend Rural Health
5 Act of 2026”.

6 **SEC. 2. LIMITING GEOGRAPHIC RECLASSIFICATION OF**
7 **HOSPITALS UNDER MEDICARE.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1886(d)(8)(E) of the So-
9 cial Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395ww(d)(8)(E)) is amend-
10 ed—

1 (1) in clause (i), by striking “described in
2 clause (ii)” and inserting “that is located in an
3 urban area (as defined in paragraph (2)(D)) and
4 meets any of the criteria described in subclause (I),
5 (II), or (IV) of clause (ii) (or, with respect to a hos-
6 pital submitting such an application before October
7 1, 2026, meets any of the criteria described in such
8 clause)”;

9 (2) in clause (ii)—

10 (A) in the matter preceding subclause (I),
11 by striking “a subsection (d) hospital” and all
12 that follows through “criteria:” and inserting
13 “the criteria described in this clause are the fol-
14 lowing:”; and

15 (B) in subclause (II)—

16 (i) by inserting “that is” before “des-
17 ignated by any law”; and

18 (ii) by inserting “, and that was so
19 designated as of January 1, 2026” before
20 the period at the end; and

21 (3) by adding at the end the following new
22 clause:

23 “(iii) No subsection (d) hospital shall be treated as
24 being located in a rural area of a State under this sub-
25 paragraph on or after October 1, 2029, regardless of any

1 application described in clause (i) submitted prior to Octo-
 2 ber 1, 2026, unless such hospital demonstrates to the Sec-
 3 retary (in a form and manner specified by the Secretary)
 4 that such hospital meets any of the criteria described in
 5 subclause (I), (II), or (IV) of clause (ii).”.

6 (b) PROHIBITING DUAL RECLASSIFICATIONS
 7 THROUGH THE MEDICARE GEOGRAPHIC CLASSIFICATION
 8 REVIEW BOARD.—Section 1886(d)(10)(D) of the Social
 9 Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395ww(d)(10)(D)) is amend-
 10 ed—

11 (1) in clause (v), by striking “Any decision”
 12 and inserting “Subject to clause (viii), any decision”;
 13 and

14 (2) by adding at the end the following new
 15 clauses:

16 “(vii) Such guidelines shall provide that the Board
 17 may not approve an application described in subparagraph
 18 (C)(i) submitted by a subsection (d) hospital requesting
 19 a change in geographic classification for a fiscal year be-
 20 ginning on or after October 1, 2026, if such hospital is
 21 treated as being located in a rural area under paragraph
 22 (8)(E) for such fiscal year.

23 “(viii) With respect to a fiscal year beginning on or
 24 after October 1, 2026, no change in the geographic classi-
 25 fication of a subsection (d) hospital that would otherwise

1 be in effect for such fiscal year pursuant to a decision of
2 the Board shall be effective for any portion of such fiscal
3 year during which such hospital is treated as being located
4 in a rural area under paragraph (8)(E).”.

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