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May 19, 2025

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21244

RE: Support for Glenn Medical Center's Critical Access Hospital Designation

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the City Council of the City of Willows, we write to express our strong support for the continued designation of Glenn Medical Center as a Critical Access Hospital (CAH).

For over 25 years, Glenn Medical Center has served as the only hospital serving Glenn County and the primary healthcare safety net for our rural population—especially our youth, seniors, veterans, and low-income residents. Its Critical Access designation has enabled it to sustain vital services in a region where no other hospital is available. The recent notification from CMS, indicating that Glenn Medical Center may no longer meet the geographic distance requirement for CAH designation, is deeply concerning. This determination is based on the location of Colusa Medical Center, another small rural hospital located just under 35 miles away, as measured by CMS.

We urge CMS to look beyond the mileage metric and consider the lived realities of rural health access. Travel between Glenn and Colusa is often slowed or obstructed by agricultural equipment, seasonal flooding, and dense fog—realities that can significantly delay time-sensitive medical transport and care.

Equally critical is the role Glenn Medical Center plays in providing emergency medical services and acute inpatient care. The hospital's Emergency Department is the only one in the county, offering 24/7 stabilization, trauma response, and crisis intervention. It regularly treats patients experiencing life-threatening conditions including strokes, heart attacks, severe injuries, behavioral health crises, and more. Without this emergency care available locally, our residents would be forced to travel significant distances during medical emergencies, which could result in preventable deaths or long-term harm.

Furthermore, the ability to admit and care for patients locally after acute illness or surgical procedures is essential to preserving continuity of care. For many of our residents, particularly elderly or medically fragile patients, traveling out of the county for inpatient care is not feasible. Glenn Medical Center's inpatient beds are a lifeline for families and caregivers who rely on proximity to support their loved ones during recovery.

The loss of CAH designation would very likely force the hospital to close its doors. This would not only eliminate critical services but also devastate our local economy. As one of the largest employers in Glenn County, Glenn Medical Center supports dozens of families and provides career pathways in a region that is otherwise predominantly agricultural.

Enclosed with this letter are the CMS notice, the hospital's formal appeal, and the original 2001 CAH designation letter for context. We understand and respect the need for standards and oversight, but we respectfully ask CMS to consider the practical and human consequences of a rigid interpretation of the distance requirement in this case.

We appreciate your commitment to equitable rural healthcare access, and we implore you to take action that will allow Glenn Medical Center to retain its CAH status and continue serving the people of Glenn County.

Sincerely,



Mayor Evan Hutson

On behalf of the Willows City Council



Richard Thomas, Council Member



Gary L. Hansen, Council Member



Matthew Busby, Council Member