



Welcome from the ORHA Co-Presidents

Rural health was front and center in DC last week at the [National Rural Health Policy Institute](#), coordinated by the National Rural Health Association. The Ohio Rural Health Association was there, too! The Ohio delegation at the RHPI included 5 medical students from the Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine and NEOMED, as well as Dr. Randall Longenecker and Dawn Mollica from the Office of Rural and Underserved Programs at the Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine at Ohio University, and myself. Dr. Longenecker and Dawn Mollica have been advocated for Ohio at the RHPI for many years. It was my first time attending the RHPI. My conclusion: *Time well spent!* I came away with timely information on a variety of rural health topics, updates on current/pending legislation, useful information for advocating and opportunities to meet with legislators themselves. NRHA provided each delegation with talking points and leave behind materials - [available on the ORHA website, click here.](#) I was surprised how accessible and interested many of the legislators were. In fact, many of them saw us as a source of information and engaged us on conversation.

We had the opportunity to talk with:

- US Senator Rob Portman's Legislative Assistants, Seth Gold & Adeline Ewing
- US Senator Sherrod Brown's Legislative Health Aide, Alyssa Brockington
- US Congressman Bob Latta's (OH 5th District) Health Legislative Asst., Paul Hartman
- US Congressman Bill Johnson (OH 6th District) & Sam Hattrup, Legislative Asst.
- US Congressman Anthony Gonzalez's (OH 16th District) Legislative Asst., Max Siwik
- US Congressman Jim Jordan's (OH 5th District) Legislative Assistant, Marshall Macheledt
- US Rep. Steve Stivers (OH 15th District) Legislative Aide, Drew Hatter
- US Rep. Brad Wenstrup's (OH 2nd) Legislative aide, Casey Quinn

I also wanted to share a policy brief that was presented by Dr. Carrie Henning-Smith, Deputy Director of the University of Minnesota Rural Health Research Center during a session on *Health Disparities in Rural America*. Those of us who live in rural communities or work in rural health know that disparities exist between rural and non-rural places. We also know that disparities exists for groups within rural places. This paper examines the differences in preventive care among rural residents by race and ethnicity. Her policy brief and presentation slides are [available on the ORHA website, click here](#). I do encourage you to take time to digest them and then next year, plan to join the Ohio delegation at the Rural Health Policy Institute!

Rural Health News

Defining Rurality Webinar, Tuesday March 16, 2021, 1:00 pm

At the Federal level, the government has 15 different definitions of what is considered "Rural". For programs like the Federal Communications Commission's Healthcare Connect Fund, the program's definition of rural vs. urban means that Ohio cities such as Athens, Chillicothe, Portsmouth and Zanesville fall into the same category for funding availability as Miami, Los Angeles and New York City.

In this webinar, Tom Reid, Project Coordinator for SOHCN, will discuss what it means to be "Rural". More specifically, how different government offices define rurality, what metrics are used to make those definitions, and how the use of those metrics disqualify certain areas from funding opportunities. He will also address how simple changes can create a more uniform application for "rural" and how advocacy from the healthcare sector can assist in effecting change.

[Click here to attend the webinar on zoom](#). Meeting ID: 820 7364 1870 Passcode: 472276

USDA Invites Partners to Join the Rural Workforce Innovation Network (RWIN)

USDA established the Rural Workforce Innovation Network (RWIN) to create a forum for public and private partners to help increase access to workforce opportunities across rural America. This network represents governmental entities, colleges and universities, nonprofit organizations, and private businesses that are actively working to improve workforce development in their local communities. The kick-off meeting for this effort has already taken place, but more meetings are planned. Learn more and join the network here: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/rwin>

USDA invests in rural Ohio's health education and telemedicine

[Click here to read the article from WCMH Columbus](#)

Covid-19 information for rural Ohio

Rural Ohioans Town Hall Tuesday, March 2, 6:30 p.m.

I would like to share with you this [communications toolkit](#), including [a graphics package](#), to help spread the word about these town halls to Ohioans. *Pages 8 and 14 of the tool kit are specific to rural populations.* For your reference, a list of the specific town halls and the dates they will be livestreamed are listed below:

- Monday, March 1, 6:30 p.m. – Asian American and Pacific Islander Ohioans
- **Tuesday, March 2, 6:30 p.m. – Rural Ohioans**

Please use these resources to promote these events through your networks. Thank you.

Jamie Carmichael

Chief Health Opportunity Advisor

Ohio Department of Health

For information about COVID-19:

coronavirus.ohio.gov

1-833-4-ASK-ODH

Vaccines distribution in rural Ohio - Spectrum News 1 TV interview

ORHA Treasurer Jaime Parsons, CEO of the Violet Startzman Clinic, Wooste, Ohio was interviewed on Spectrum News1 about Covid-19 vaccines in rural community. [Watch the interview here](#)

Financial resources for businesses and families that have been impacted by Covid-19

The Small Business Relief Grant is designed to assist Ohio businesses that have been harmed by the effects of COVID-19. The \$125 million grant fund will provide relief to Ohio businesses that have been negatively impacted by COVID-19. Funding for the program is from the CARES Act. The business must be a for-profit entity with no more than 25 total or full-time equivalent Ohio employees as of Jan. 1, 2020. The applicant business has a physical location in Ohio and earns at least 90% of annual revenue from activities based in Ohio.

[Click here for information on business relief](#)

[Click here for information on how families can access resources](#)

Communication and Education Committee Update

Call for webinars and trainings

ORHA would like to host webinars and presentations for our members. Do you or your colleagues have a training program or informational presentation that you would like to share with ORHA members and other stakeholders?

[Click here to contact Laura Akgerman about scheduling a webinar.](#)

Ohio Rural Health Association Scholarship Program

The ORHA Board is pleased to announce the **Ohio Rural Health Association Scholarship Program**. The scholarship funds are intended to promote professional development and training of individuals who contribute to the mission and vision of ORHA. ORHA members may apply for up to \$500. Members may apply to funds every two years; preference is given to members who have not previously received funds. *These funds are provided in partnership with the State Office of Rural Health at the Ohio Department of Health.*

[Click here for the scholarship application.](#)

Must be a current member of ORHA to be considered for the scholarship.

Not a member? [Click here to join ORHA.](#)

Scholarship application must be submitted prior to June 1 by 5 pm. Approved applicants will be notified by June 8.

One training idea to use these scholarship funds:

Discount Available for Rural Health Coding & Billing Specialist Online Course, [click here for more information](#)

Legislative Committee Update

The legislative committee continues to meet monthly. Members of the committee continue to engage external stakeholders to ensure that we are aware of upcoming and current issues, as well as to identify opportunities for ORHA to lend our voice to issues pertinent to rural health in Ohio.

If you would like to join the Legislative committee, [please click here to e-mail Beth Kluding, Legislative Committee Co-Chair](#)

Over the past few months, we have engaged with the representatives from

- American Heart Association
- National Rural Health Association
- Office of Rural Health
- Other state rural health association
- Ohio Hospital Association

A few notable pieces of legislation for members to be aware of include:

- B151- passing through the end of June 2021- This will allow paramedics to operate at the top of their license within the walls of the hospitals.H
- HB 144- aimed at reducing mandatory overtime for nursing staff.
- Ohio SB 341- which would include Ohio in the Nurse Compact Licensing
- HB 3880 Surprise Billing- This was signed by Governor Dewine in addition to the federal legislature that has been proposed.
- HRSA's Revised Definition of Rural Area- The new definition expands the ability for areas located in close proximity to metropolitan areas to be included as rural for grant access.
- HB133- Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021- This has increased the cap for RHC reimbursement. Historically, as costs have increased, the cap had not, so this will attempt to correct this and right-size reimbursements keeping access to care in rural areas as had been the original intent of the RHC program.

Membership Committee Update

Membership committee will be forming this spring. [Click here to e-mail Sharon Casapulla](#) if you would like to help ORHA grow membership, and develop resources for our members.

Join the ORHA Effort

As a member of an essential and growing organization, you have an opportunity to contribute to the vitality of rural health across Ohio!

Now recruiting members for:

- Communication and Education
- Legislative
- Membership

The ORHA Board is excited to start working with you!

[Click here to request information on joining one of our committees](#)



**Thanks to our Spring newsletter sponsor,
Board member JoAnn Reilly of:**

Pegasus Freedom Reins Ohio

- Nonprofit organization, located in Union County, proudly serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Uplifts individuals through the use of animal assisted therapy & agricultural job skill training



Animal Assisted Therapy

Animal assisted therapy is effective in building trust, as well as improving self-image, self-efficacy, and social skills.

Agricultural Job Skill Training

Agricultural education and training provides a sense of peace, purpose, and well-being.

Mission	Vision	Values
Pegasus Freedom Reins is a place for people to be uplifted and to address mental, physical and behavioral challenges associated with life's circumstances, by connecting with animals and our environment—ultimately improving health, establishing a sense of peace and overall well-being.	Pegasus Freedom Reins exists to help as many people as we can through techniques associated with animals and our environment.	<p>Love & Kindness: Toward ourselves, others, animals and our environment.</p> <p>Respect: Live by the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would want others to do unto you."</p> <p>Community: Offering a place of peace for individuals, family and the community.</p>



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\$100/month sponsorship includes placement of logo or flyer in the newsletter and on the website.

For more information, or to sponsor an upcoming newsletter, please contact Laura Akgerman at secretary@ohioruralhealth.org.

Share the Good Word Across Ohio!

Got a story to share or an upcoming event? Perhaps an upcoming training, workshop, or educational opportunity? Let us know! We'd love to share your information with the rest of our community. Connect by emailing us at secretary@ohioruralhealth.org



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