

U.S. Rep. Kind: Introduces bipartisan bill to expand access to physical therapy services in rural regions

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Washington, DC — Today, **Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI)** introduced the bipartisan *Primary Health Services Enhancement Act* to expand access to physical therapy services in rural regions. Many rural residents receive their primary care at Community Health Centers (CHCs), but restrictive requirements make it difficult for CHCs to offer physical therapy. This legislation would reduce the burdensome requirements and make it easier for all Wisconsinites to receive physical therapy services close to home.

Increasing access to physical therapy is an important step to combat the opioid epidemic, which has had a devastating impact on many rural communities across the country. Physical therapy is one of the leading treatments for chronic pain, but access to this care is often limited in rural communities. Ensuring physical therapists can practice in medically underserved areas, including areas heavily impacted by the opioid crisis, will enhance access to non-opioid pain treatments.

The *Primary Health Services Enhancement Act* was introduced with **Reps. Diana DeGette (D-CO), Jackie Walorski (R-IN), and Don Bacon (R-NE)**.

“Our Community Health Centers play a critical role in providing care to rural communities across Wisconsin. Patients at these facilities can access physicians, nurses, and dentists, receive emergency medical care, and more – they should be able to receive physical therapy too without having to jump through hoops,” said **Rep. Ron Kind**. “This bipartisan legislation will cut through red tape and ensure more Wisconsinites have access to essential physical therapy services and pain management alternatives, regardless of where they live.”

“Community health centers provide health care services to over 29 million people in over 12,000 rural and urban communities,” said **American Physical Therapy Association President Sharon L. Dunn, PT, PhD**. “Increased access to physical therapist services in these communities is essential for those recovering from Long COVID, and provides a non-pharmacological treatment option for those with chronic pain. We are grateful to Rep. Kind for his leadership on this important legislation that will expand patient access to essential physical therapy services, and provide flexibility to community health centers in how they deliver care.”

“We look forward to the opportunity this bill would provide for Community Health Centers to expand key services for patients, including physical therapy. Community Health Centers fill a unique local gap, meeting the needs of underserved patients not only in rural Western Wisconsin but across the U.S. Community Health Centers are always looking for more creative ways to address the needs of patients that experience barriers to reaching their greatest health potential, whether that’s supporting patients with transportation, or food programs, or enrollment in insurance. Providing physical therapy would be an excellent addition to that whole-person care. We thank Congressman Kind for his attention to this issue, and his continued support of the health care safety net,” said **Stephanie Harrison, CEO, Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association**.

“We recognize the importance of physical therapy in the well-being of our patients and have provided these services for many years. However, if Medicare covered these services, it would free up dollars to expand in other areas like dentistry and taking primary care via mobile services to those who have transportation challenges,” said **Eva Scheppa, Director of Health Services, Family Health Center of Marshfield**.

Rep. Kind is the co-chair of the House Rural Health Care Coalition and serves on the Subcommittee on Health for the Ways and Means Committee, the most powerful – and the oldest – committee in the House of Representatives. It has jurisdiction over tax measures, the management of public debt, trade and tariff laws, Social Security, Medicare, pensions, and many other economic growth measures.

Read the bipartisan bill [here](#).