



2700 W. Norfolk Avenue
Norfolk, Nebraska 68701
Phone: (402) 371-4880

January 26, 2010

The Honorable E. Benjamin Nelson
United States Senate
720 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-2706

Dear Senator Nelson:

On behalf of Faith Regional Health Services in Norfolk, Nebraska, we are writing to you concerning an important issue to both our hospital and our community. We are respectfully requesting your active support for congressional funding to help assist in the development of a Rural Telemedicine Outreach Initiative; this is part of an ongoing effort to meet the growing health care needs of the residents in Northeast Nebraska.

Faith Regional Health Services (FRHS) is the primary provider for more than 100,000 citizens in 25 counties and is the largest healthcare system in a 100 mile radius in Northeastern Nebraska. The current acute care facility has 166 beds and is a Center of Excellence in cardiovascular care, physical rehabilitation and obstetrics. More than 75,000 patients are served annually on an inpatient or outpatient basis and we deliver around 1,000 babies per year. In addition to the acute care services, Faith Regional (FR) is affiliated with FR Surgery Center, FR Physician Services, Saint Joseph's Rehabilitation and Care Center and Skyview Villa Assisted Living. There are multiple campuses that provide medical services in Norfolk and Faith Regional also serves highly rural areas in the region through outreach clinics. Faith Regional supports these rural Northeast Nebraska hospitals and clinics with many clinical, educational and training initiatives including remote-beside monitoring, tele-radiology, allied professional consultations and assistance with OSHA mandates.

Faith Regional has made a multi-million dollar investment in a state-of-the-art electronic medical record (EMR) system that combines computer-based imaging, evidence-based medicine support, and storage and networking technologies, including interfaces for all major departments and services. The system dramatically improves our care delivery through online review of diagnostic tests, putting critical diagnostic capabilities into the hands of any FR physician, at any FR location, in a timely and efficient manner. This, along with its ability to convert many of our manual processes to electronic process, frees the physician to spend more time with the patient, improving communication, compliance, and ultimately the quality of care. Anticipating the incredible benefits of this EMR system, and in light of the commitment that Faith Regional has already made to rural healthcare, Faith Regional Health Services is proposing to integrate the rural facilities in the region into the FRHS EMR system so those facilities can have the same benefits without having to purchase one of their own.

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There are 11 rural community hospitals and clinics in Northeast Nebraska that FRHS currently supports with outreach efforts. For most rural facilities the cost of making an investment into digital technology and advanced medical services is almost impossible. Yet because the patients they serve are often older and more isolated, and cannot travel to access the health system on a regular basis, these are the very facilities that need these services the most. Extending technological support through the EMR system to the rural healthcare facilities will address a critical unmet need in those hospitals and will in turn increase operational efficiencies, lower the financial costs of delivering care for everyone in the region and improve the overall quality of care to the patient.

We are respectfully requesting your help in securing \$2 million in assistance from Congress in the FY 2011 Labor-HHS Appropriations Bill to assist in the development of a Rural Telemedicine Outreach Initiative to regionally connect rural Northeast Nebraska healthcare facilities. We know this will dramatically improve the quality of care for those we serve in rural Nebraska.

Please accept this letter not only as a request for support, but as an invitation to visit our facilities for a personal briefing on this project. We would be happy to explain in detail how the plan will benefit patients and our region. We look forward to working with you and your staff on this initiative. Thank you for your support of Faith Regional Health Services and health care throughout the State of Nebraska.

Sincerely,



Jim Sinek, FACHE
President/CEO



James Miller
Board Chair