

Tennessee's Heart Failure

In life there are things you expect and others you do not. Having a family history of heart related issues, I was not surprised when I recently experienced heart failure. Conversely, having lived in Tennessee my entire life I would never believe this great state suffered from heart failure as well. Shockingly, that is exactly what has happened.

In October 2017 Tennessee sought and received a moratorium from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to no longer pay new Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) the additional costs of complying with Public Law 95-210 and providing an additional access point for healthcare to the most rural and poorest residents. This in addition to Tennessee's failure to expand TennCare even though billions of federal dollars were available to provide this care has led to catastrophic results in Tennessee.

Eight rural Tennessee hospitals have closed since 2010. Only Texas with ten has more than our state and comparing Tennessee to Texas is not exactly an apple to oranges comparison. Since hospitals have an obligation under EMTALA to treat all patients that present these eight communities have lost one of their last health access points for rural, TennCare patients. Now by depriving new RHCs necessary funding to open, expand, and treat TennCare patients, a heartless Tennessee is choking out another access point for our poor, rural, and underserved.

Next week I will spend three days in one of Chattanooga's state of the art hospitals receiving some of the world's best healthcare possible for my heart failure and I am not too proud to ask for your prayers for a swift recovery. In addition, I ask for your prayers for the poor, underserved of Tennessee. Pray that the once great state of Tennessee, the Volunteer State, will recover from heart failure as well and do the right thing for the residents of rural Tennessee and not continue this heartless and senseless moratorium.

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