Sample Letter to State Legislators, Members of Congress

Hospital or Health System Letterhead

The Honorable [LEGISLATOR”S FULL NAME]

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear Representative/Senator [LAST NAME]:

As you probably know [HOSPITAL OR HEALTH SYSTEM] treats thousands of patients each year and is a major employer in [CITY NAME]. [HOSPITAL OR HEALTH SYSTEM] recently participated in an initiative through the Kentucky Hospital Association (KHA) to quantify both traditional and non-traditional benefits provided to the community.

Traditional community benefits are uncompensated care, which includes health care services provided to patients who are unable to pay and the unreimbursed costs of government programs such as Medicare and Medicaid. Non-traditional community benefits are programs and services offered by Kentucky hospitals out in the community — beyond hospital walls — to improve health status or increase access to care.

[HOSPITAL OR HEALTH SYSTEM] was proud to provide [$XX] in community benefit services [to more than NUMBER residents — *optional; insert if available*] in the 2013 fiscal year (the most recent year for which data is available). These efforts included non-traditional benefits through programs such as [CUSTOMIZE TO FIT YOUR HOSPITAL, i.e., health screenings, immunizations, free and reduced-cost clinics].

In order to be able to provide these programs and services for little or no cost, hospitals must be financially strong and stable. As you know, hospitals’ financial strength is intimately tied to payments from Medicare and Medicaid — in Kentucky, approximately 70 percent of hospital patients are covered by one of these programs. Unfortunately, both Medicare and Medicaid programs continue to pay Kentucky hospitals less than the actual cost of care. In 2013, Kentucky hospitals were shouldered with $300 million in Medicaid losses and another $509 million in Medicare losses.

Hospitals cannot continue to absorb the increasing costs of providing care plus keep up with the advancement of new technologies and medical treatments. Of great concern is the economy, which has taken a toll on Kentucky hospitals. Many have seen reduced patient volumes and all are experiencing an increase in the number of patients who are unable to pay deductibles and co-payments. The recently enacted health care reform legislation (Affordable Care Act) severely cut payments to medical providers, greatly expands entitlement programs and does very little to curb the underlying factors responsible for escalating health care costs. The state expansion of Medicaid has resulted in adding some 323,000 additional people to the Medicaid program, bringing the total to 1.2 million people (1 out of 4 Kentuckians) now covered under Medicaid. As a result, this shortfall is expected to grow by another $135 million per year.

I share this information with you because it’s important that you understand the impact [HOSPITAL NAME] has — not only because of the work we do within our hospital, but also beyond our hospital walls and in the community.

Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or would like more information about [HOSPITAL OR HEALTH SYSTEM]. Thank you for your representation and support as a valued community partner and steward.

Sincerely,

NAME, TITLE

CONTACT INFO