



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## Rural Healthcare Accessibility

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- [Health](#)

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- [Legislative Commission on Rural Resources](#)

*Senator Young celebrates National Rural Health Day*

ALBANY— The knowledge that adequate healthcare is readily available can provide peace of mind. Yet, access to healthcare remains a challenge for many people in New York State, especially for those living in rural areas.

“Today is National Rural Health Day,” said Senator Catharine Young (R, I, C—Olean), chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. “On this day, recognizing the importance of healthcare in rural communities, we celebrate the caregivers and organizations throughout the state who provide preventative care, emergency medical services, long-term care, and other healthcare services to people in rural areas.”

The National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health has designated the third Thursday in November as “National Rural Health Day.” The day is an opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of rural healthcare providers and the community spirit in rural areas. It also serves as an opportunity to address the healthcare challenges that are unique to rural areas.

There are many obstacles that rural healthcare providers must overcome. Geographic distance and weather conditions often make it difficult for patients to travel to care providers. Higher volumes of uninsured and elderly patients are served in rural New York and can result in financial challenges for rural hospitals and healthcare facilities. Staffing shortages are prevalent in many areas.

Still, healthcare providers, non-profit organizations, municipalities, and government officials throughout rural New York are working to address these concerns.

Outreach to the community can play an important part in the process. For example, there are events like today’s Community Health and Wellness Fair at Alfred University’s McLane Health and Wellness Center. From 9 a.m. until 4 p.m., there will be a range of healthcare workshops, vendors, informational tables, wellness screenings, and even flu shots available to the public. Events like these serve as opportunities to share important healthcare information and conduct health screenings for people in attendance. They also function as a reminder of the vital role played by our rural healthcare providers, and their importance within our communities.

It is also important to address rural healthcare concerns at the State level. Senate Bill 7852, sponsored by Senator Young and passed earlier this year by the Legislature, expands options for telehealth services. The bill will provide patients with more opportunities to seek the care they need much closer to home. Patients will have greater access to a wide range of healthcare providers and services. They are also less likely to face costly hospitalization, experience better continuity of care, and remain more closely connected to their existing support systems. As demonstrated in recent studies, telehealth services result in better outcomes for patients, and these services provide for greater peace of mind. The bill is awaiting the Governor’s signature.

“Ensuring that people living in rural New York are able to obtain high-quality healthcare services is an issue of utmost importance. I will continue to reach out to

individuals and organizations to identify rural healthcare issues and to pass legislation that improves access to healthcare,” said Senator Young.