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Description automatically generated **Policy Committee**

**Minutes of March 16, 2021**

Present: Barry Brogan, Claire Parde, Courtney Shaler, Anne Marie Snell,

Ann Abdella, Liz Urbanski Farrell, Ali Coates, Susan Williams

Excused: Paul Pettit, Bryan O’Donovan, , Helen Evans, Marie Mongeon, Mandy Qualls, Scott Emery

Staff: Sara Wall Bollinger

The meeting convened at 10:02AM.

1. Welcome, quorum, introductions & agenda modifications.
2. Minutes of February 16th [Ann/Ali] were approved.
3. Closing the Loop

* Sara met with Jessica Morelli of Iroquois Healthcare Alliance. It was agreed that the two organizations will collaborate on community paramedicine and seating the Rural Health Council.
* Claire shared that she had been sent paperwork to complete for the Rural Health Council.

*Action*

* Ann A. will check with Karen Madden re: who has been nominated to the Rural Health Council.

1. Albany Advocacy

The situation is very dynamic in Albany. The One-House Budgets have restored many cuts in the Executive Budget. NYSARH needs to be very vocal over the next couple weeks. There was discussion regarding next steps. Key goals = RHN/RAH and AHEC.

* **Rural Health Network Development Program** and the **Rural Access Hospital Development Program**  We appreciate that the proposed budgets appear to include $9.4 million for rural health programs. However, this level of funding represents a significant reduction from necessary funding provided in previous years. We are calling for the **restoration of rural health funding to $12.68 million.**
* **Area Health Education Centers**: Another program important to rural New Yorkers is the Area Health Education Centers, which were zeroed out in the SFY21 Budget, jeopardizing their federal funding match. Thank you for including the **restoration of AHEC funding to $2.2 million**.

*Action*

* Sara will update the advocacy letter and distribute it to committee members.
* Policy Committee members and other key NYSARH members will reach out to the legislative leaders with whom they met in January/February. Sara will send a spreadsheet showing everyone’s assignments.
* NYSARH will send a formal letter to Assembly and Senate leaders.
* Sara will send a letter template to all NYSARH members asking them to contact their own legislators.
* Sara will send a note to our policy partners sharing our priorities. [CHCANYS, HANYS, NYSACHO, NYSPHA, Iroquois]

1. Federal Issues

* Rural Health Clinic

Over the past few years more hospitals in NYS have started RHCs. In the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 there was an obscure change in the payment formula that penalizes some RHCs. NYSARH has been invited to join a national advocacy weekly zoom call. NRHA is aware of this issue.

* Critical Access Hospital

Rep. Stefanik and Delgado have introduced language to interpret the 35 miles to hospital rule for CAH-eligibility to consider only main roads, not secondary roads.

* Federal definition of Rural

Ann A. shared concern regarding a new definition being proposed by OMB. Comment deadline is 3/16. NRHA sent a letter. Motion [Ann/Ali] that NYSARH send a letter advising more study on the impact the new definition might have on health disparities passed.

*Action*

* Sara will draft and then send Public Comment to OMB.

Adjourned at 10:52.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Wall Bollinger