

The following chart reflects WHG's analysis of key provisions of the proposals for rural health reform that have been released by Democratic presidential candidates thus far.<sup>1</sup> Specifically:

- **Sen. Elizabeth Warren (MA)** proposes to increase Medicare reimbursements in rural areas, strengthen federal oversight of anticompetitive behavior, expand healthcare workforce capacity, and improve access to high-speed internet, among other initiatives.<sup>2</sup>
- **Mayor Pete Buttigieg (South Bend, IN)** proposes to increase Medicare reimbursements in rural areas, expand health care workforce capacity, improve access to high-speed internet, among other initiatives.<sup>3</sup>

Though not reflected in the chart below, other presidential candidates have issued broad policy proposals regarding their respective positions on rural health reform, including:

- **Sen. Kamala Harris (CA)** proposes to increase residency slots for rural areas with workforce shortages and loan forgiveness.<sup>4</sup>
- **Former Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julián Castro** proposes to increase Medicare reimbursements, expand health care workforce capacity, establish incentives through Medicare to promote the use of nurse practitioners and physician's assistants to have full practice authority, and provide grants through Medicare to teaching hospitals and medical schools to establish urban-rural rotation program.<sup>5</sup>

## Rural Health Plans

Democratic Candidate	Sen. Elizabeth Warren (MA)	Mayor Pete Buttigieg (South Bend, IN)
<b>Insurance Reform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishes a single-payer health care system through Medicare for All, as proposed by Sen. Bernie Sander</li> </ul> <p>Note: More details on Sen. Sanders' proposal are delineated in the WHG's side-by-side analysis of Democratic presidential candidates' comprehensive health reform proposals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishes a Medicare-like buy-in public option</li> </ul> <p>Note: More details on Mayor Buttigieg's proposals related to the public option are delineated in the WHG's side-by-side analysis of Democratic presidential candidates' comprehensive health reform proposals.</p>

<sup>1</sup> This analysis includes only candidates that qualified for the fourth Democratic presidential debate on October 15.

<sup>2</sup> <https://medium.com/@teamwarren/my-plan-to-invest-in-rural-america-94e3a80d88aa>

<sup>3</sup> <https://peteforamerica.com/policies/secure-rural-health/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://kamalaharris.org/medicare-for-all/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://issues.juliancastro.com/health-care/>

<b>Democratic Candidate</b>	<b>Sen. Elizabeth Warren (MA)</b>	<b>Mayor Pete Buttigieg (South Bend, IN)</b>
<b>Delivery Reform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creates a new designation that increases Medicare reimbursement rates for rural hospitals, relieves distance requirements, and offers flexibility in the delivery of services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increases Medicare reimbursement rates for providers working in medically underserved areas;</li> <li>Encourages states to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for providers working in medically underserved areas;</li> <li>Establishes a new designation for rural health facilities that provide only emergency and outpatient care to receive Medicare payments and have flexibility to transport patients to hospitals, if necessary<sup>6</sup>;</li> <li>Works with CMS to expand innovative models (e.g., multi-payer global budget model); and</li> <li>Supports new of models of care and financing that emphasize tech-forward, multi-disciplinary, and/or team-based outpatient care settings (e.g., ECHO model, Community Outpatient Hospital, Rural Health Clinic Program, School-Based Health Center).</li> </ul>
<b>Anticompetitive Behavior</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Directs the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to block all future mergers between hospitals unless companies can show that the merger will maintain or improve access to care;</li> <li>Strengthens FTC oversight over health care organizations (e.g., promulgates regulations and guidance to require all mergers involving health care centers be reported to the FTC; authorizes FTC to review non-profit hospitals; penalizes vertically integrated health care companies that increase costs); and</li> <li>Repeals Certificate of Public Advantage (COPA) statutes that protect health care organizations from federal antitrust review.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not specified</li> </ul>
<b>Workforce and Capacity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lifts the cap on residency placements by 15,000 and targets half of new placements in medically underserved areas (rural residency programs, residency programs with Rural Training Track (RTT) programs, and Indian Health Service)</li> <li>Expands the National Health Service Corps loan repayment program to \$15 billion and the HIS loan repayment program to \$1 billion over the 10 years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expands the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, National Health Service Corps, and the Conrad 30 waiver program<sup>7</sup>;</li> <li>Expands the graduate medical education (GME) and RRT programs;</li> <li>Expands the role of emergency medical service workers (e.g., EMTs, paramedics) to assist with preventive and primary care services</li> </ul>

<sup>6</sup> This proposal is based on the Rural Emergency Medical Center Act of 2018 ([H.R. 5678](#))

<sup>7</sup> The Conrad 30 waiver program waives the J-1 visa requirement that foreign doctors return to their home country for two year before reentering the United State to work

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	<p>to cover full loan repayment for five years of service and to increase the number of health professionals serving rural and Native American communities;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increases funding for community health centers by 15 percent over the next five years; and</li> <li>Establishes a \$25 billion capital fund to support initiatives to improve access to care in health professional shortage areas (e.g., constructing new facility, expanding service capacity, establishing telemedicine, piloting mobile clinics).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensures the Indian Health Service receives adequate funding annually<sup>8</sup>; and</li> <li>Works with the Veteran Affairs' Office of Rural Health to support rural health initiatives for veterans.</li> </ul>
<b>Telehealth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improves access to reliable, high-speed internet to increase access to telehealth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improves access to reliable, high-speed internet to increase access to telehealth;</li> <li>Doubles funding for the Federal Communication Commission's Rural Health Care Program to \$1 billion annually;</li> <li>Promotes federal oversight of telehealth by developing and implementing evidence-based clinical guidance for telehealth services and establishing continuous quality improvement;</li> <li>Expands the types of settings that can receive reimbursement for telehealth services (e.g., outpatient rehabilitation centers);</li> <li>Allows reimbursement for virtually treating patients at home; and</li> <li>Amends licensure for virtual care programs to make it easier for providers to virtually treat patients in different states.</li> </ul>
<b>Opioid Crisis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides \$10 billion per year over 10 years, which includes funding for states and localities to fight the opioid crisis; public health surveillance, biomedical research, and training for health professionals; and treatment, recovery, and harm reduction services, including Naloxone.</li> </ul> <p>Note: More details on Sen. Warren's proposals related to the opioid crisis are delineated in the WHG's side-by-side analysis of Democratic presidential candidates' mental and behavioral health care proposals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enforces mental health parity;</li> <li>Ensures universal access to therapy and medication to treat opioid addiction; and</li> <li>Provides \$10 billion each year over 10 years to support initiatives to end the opioid crisis.</li> </ul> <p>Note: More details on Mayor Buttigieg's proposals related to the opioid crisis are delineated in the WHG's side-by-side analysis of Democratic presidential candidates' mental and behavioral health care proposals.</p>

<sup>8</sup> The plan also proposes reauthorizing the Special Diabetes Program for Indians and recognizing IHS and tribally-managed health departments as equal partners to improve the nation's public health infrastructure.

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<b>Social Determinants of Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implements the Universal Child Care plan to ensure rural families have access to affordable childcare<sup>9</sup>; and</li> <li>• Implements the Safe and Affordable Housing plan, which invests \$523 million in affordable rental homes in rural communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designates certain communities as Health Equity Zones, which will receive financial and technical resource to help reduce or eliminate health disparities;</li> <li>• Works with CMS to expand program and develop new pilots to directly reimburse community-based social interventions in Medicare and Medicaid;</li> <li>• Increases funding for state and local public health departments;</li> <li>• Supports initiatives to address food insecurity and obesity by increasing access to healthy food and creating an infrastructure that promotes physical activity;</li> <li>• Implements protocols for data collection and analysis of historically marginalized groups to better address health disparities</li> <li>• Implements public transit initiatives to increase access to healthy food, medical services, employment, etc.</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> <https://elizabethwarren.com/plans/universal-child-care>