

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 20, 2021

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

I write in enthusiastic support of Randolph County's efforts to reopen their health facility in Cuthbert, Georgia. This is a top priority for the County, so I write to ask for your consideration of the corresponding application by Scott Health, Inc. for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's *Emergency Rural Health Care Track Two: Impact Grant*.

Southwest Georgia includes five of the lowest 10 ranked counties in Georgia in the annual health outcomes category. Randolph County, one of the counties that would fall into the Scott Health service area, scored a 94.5 in the Distressed Communities Index (DCI), placing it in the severest range of factors that influence community health. These factors include education, poverty rate, non-working adults, housing vacancy rates, median household income, and employment availability. The closure of the Southwest Georgia Regional Medical Center in Cuthbert, Georgia in October 2020 means that some Georgians in this region have to drive more than two hours to access basic care at another facility.

The Randolph County Hospital Authority has chosen Scott Health, Inc. as their preferred partner in the endeavor to reopen this hospital. Scott Health, Inc. is a not-for-profit health facility providing affordable access to health and wellness services in rural and underserved areas. With this grant, Scott Health, Inc. and local leaders would be better positioned to reopen an Acute Care Hospital in Cuthbert, restoring critical health care services for residents in rural Early, Calhoun, Clay and Randolph counties. The Randolph County Hospital Authority has formed a consortium comprised of Andrew College, Scott Health, Inc., and themselves to deliver quality health care, improve rural health care access and outcomes, and create a sustainable health care system that can double as an economic driver for Clay, Calhoun and Randolph Counties.

Reopening this hospital will have ripple effects far beyond the immediate counties of service. It will make way for the return of medical professionals to the community, a restoration of

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diagnostic services, and a new demand for health care support employees. It will allow for residents to not have to drive long distances for care.

I am pleased to lend my full support to this vital project addressing urgent issues facing rural communities in Georgia. Health care is a human right, and to make that a reality for all Georgians they must have reasonable access to care. As I stated in my September 23<sup>rd</sup> letter to you, I ask that you lend all appropriate thought and consideration to this worthwhile project and the agency's full complete support to reopen the hospital in Cuthbert, Georgia. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to my grants coordinator, Darrin Owens at (470) 786-7790.

Sincerely,



Jon Ossoff  
U.S. Senator