

## House Resolution 231

By: Representatives Powell of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Murphy of the 18<sup>th</sup>, McCall of the 90<sup>th</sup>, Childers of the 13<sup>th</sup>, Porter of the 143<sup>rd</sup> and others

## A RESOLUTION

- 1 Recognizing "Rural Health Day"; and for other purposes.
- 2 WHEREAS, the Georgia Rural Health Association (GRHA) promotes rural health as a  
3 distinct concern in Georgia, serves as an advocate for rural health by promoting improved  
4 health status and an improved health system for rural Georgians, and encourages the  
5 development of appropriate health care resources for residents of rural Georgia; and
- 6 WHEREAS, GRHA has conducted an inclusive listening session process across rural  
7 Georgia, through survey of attendees of the "Celebrating Rural Georgia" conference and the  
8 members of GRHA, to determine rural Georgians' expectations from their lawmakers related  
9 to health care; and
- 10 WHEREAS, rural Georgians expressed a desire to be understood by their lawmakers, wanted  
11 access to health insurance, and indicated concern that their health care systems are in crisis;  
12 and
- 13 WHEREAS, citizens are also concerned about poor health status, lack of access to quality  
14 health care providers, and the links between their local economy, health systems and health  
15 status; and
- 16 WHEREAS, access to capital, transportation/EMS, equitable reimbursement funding, 100  
17 percent access, prevention, health care work force development, and hospital authority  
18 training were specific needs identified for legislative action among those surveyed; and
- 19 WHEREAS, Georgia has 117 rural counties, and some 2.2 million people, approximately  
20 one-third of the state's population, reside in those rural counties; and
- 21 WHEREAS, nearly 45 percent of Georgians who reside in households with income below  
22 the federal poverty level reside in rural Georgia areas, and these areas have lower educational

1 attainment levels and higher dropout rates than the metropolitan areas of the state, factors  
2 which have an adverse effect on the health status of these Georgians; and

3 WHEREAS, infant mortality, child abuse, and teen pregnancy rates are higher in rural areas,  
4 and these regions are disproportionately impacted by the state's growing uninsured  
5 population and a rapidly increasing elderly population who often suffer from multiple  
6 chronic illnesses; and

7 WHEREAS, rural Georgia areas have only one-half as many physicians per capita as urban  
8 Georgia areas while nearly 60 percent of the state's hospitals, of which 40 percent are  
9 experiencing financial difficulties, are located in rural counties; and

10 WHEREAS, rural Georgia's health care needs far exceed its current provider and resource  
11 capacity, and health and health care are connected to the economy and demography of a rural  
12 community; and

13 WHEREAS, the Georgia Rural Development Council included health care as a top priority  
14 item in its 2001 policy agenda with the finding that the continued decline in the availability  
15 and quality of health care facilities and services in rural areas contributes to continued  
16 economic distress; and

17 WHEREAS, Georgia has 99 designated health professional shortage areas located in rural  
18 areas of the state; and

19 WHEREAS, lack of adequate health care resources and lack of health care workers are  
20 deterrents to industry recruitment, since health problems undermine worker and community  
21 productivity; and

22 WHEREAS, the many dedicated public and private providers, community leaders, and  
23 advocates who work diligently to meet the tremendous needs of rural communities in  
24 Georgia richly deserve recognition for and assistance in their efforts to improve the health  
25 status and economic viability of these areas; and

26 WHEREAS, the GRHA is an advocacy organization which seeks to bring attention to the  
27 plight of rural consumers and those who provide their care; and

1 WHEREAS, this group and many others recognize that rural areas need special attention and  
2 consideration in any decisions affecting the health care system and that state and federal  
3 officials must seek to have a greater understanding of the problems and needs of rural  
4 Georgians.

5 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that  
6 the members of this body recognize the foregoing by designating February 9, 2001, as "Rural  
7 Health Day" and pledge commitment to policies and programs which will support quality,  
8 affordable health care for rural Georgians.

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized  
10 and directed to transmit an appropriate copy of this resolution to the Georgia Rural Health  
11 Association.