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Category: Broadband Availability

Comments: Founded in 1948, Children's is the only full-service, pediatric health care center in Nebraska and provides expertise in more than 50 pediatric specialty services to children across a five-state region and beyond. The 145-bed, non-profit hospital operates the only Level IV Newborn Intensive Care Unit in the region. Children's NICU provides critical life-saving care for the tiniest and most fragile newborns. In 2018, Children's provided medical care for 149,700 children. In addition to serving Omaha youth and families, Children's provides for the health care needs of children from throughout the region, with outreach clinics in Columbus, Grand Island, Hastings, Kearney, Norfolk, Lincoln and North Platte, NE; Sioux City and Atlantic, IA; and Rapid City, SD.

Challenges facing care delivery in today's health care environment are considerable and will require strategies and solutions to address extending care access, improving care quality, distribution of limited providers, specifically pediatric specialty providers, and lowering the cost of care. In a state where a majority of the population lives in just three of the 93 counties, the concentration of goods and services in urban areas is understandable. But that uneven spread means that extra care must be taken to ensure rural areas have enough resources, particularly health care resources. Forward-thinking initiatives will be critical to guaranteeing more sparsely populated regions of the state have access to quality health care. The closure of rural healthcare facilities or the discontinuation of services can have a negative impact on the access to healthcare in a rural community. Our rural healthcare systems are fragile; when one facility closes or a provider leaves, it can impact care and access across the community. Traveling to receive healthcare services places the burden on patients. For individuals with low incomes, no paid time off of their jobs, physical limitations, acute conditions, or no personal transportation, these burdens can significantly affect their ability to access healthcare services. Telehealth is a key solution to help address rural healthcare access issues. It has the ability to transgress the many barriers that mankind has erected – geographic, time, social, cultural, and political – giving it the “potential” to achieve health care support for “anyone, anytime, anywhere”. In order to achieve this our families in rural areas need broadband access. Broadband access is not just essential for access to care via telehealth, but it allows individuals to learn about health topics online, access their electronic health records, and learn about programs and opportunities to improve their health. The significance of broadband to telehealth has prompted it to be considered a social determinant of health. Broadband being a social determinant of health makes it even more important that rural patients have access to it so they can receive the same caliber of care as patients who are able to physical go into their doctor's office. The Good Life slogan shouldn't come with contingencies when it comes to providing care. Instead, it should come with quality, easily attainable health care within reach, no matter where we call home, when we need it.

Regards,

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