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Client Alert: Ohio Deploying $200M in Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Funds: Key Initiatives and Opportunities

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The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) received more than **$200 million** in federal funding from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) via the **Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Fund** to mitigate the effects of rural hospital closures and lack of health care access in underserved regions.

During recent testimony before the House Health Committee regarding the Department's FY26-27 budget, ODH Director Bruce Vanderhoff, M.D. outlined the state's strategic "Year One" roadmap. For our clients, this signals both immediate funding opportunities and a shifting regulatory focus toward community-based care models.

Primary Funding "Buckets" and Initiatives

The ODH is currently prioritizing programs that demonstrate long-term scalability and "whole community" integration.

- **School-Based Health Centers:** ODH is supporting **15 brick-and-mortar expansions** and four new start-ups. These centers are viewed as high-value investments because they provide needed care to many communities, including those in provider shortage areas, and often become financially self-sustaining after approximately two years of initial funding.
- **OhioSEE (Vision Outreach):** Currently active in 15 high-need counties, this program focuses on establishing vision care and prescriptions for students. While legislators have questioned the initial return on investment ($5M for ~500 students), ODH maintains that early funds are strictly for essential infrastructure.
- **Clinical Integration & Maternal Health:** The proposed budget includes **$92 million for clinical integration**. ODH is specifically seeking "whole community networks" to address health-related issues

within communities, including maternal care.

- **Workforce & Pharmacy Initiatives:** ODH is actively soliciting request for proposals (RFPs) for the **Rural Health Workforce Pipeline** (Pathways Upskilling and Retention) and the **RHT Pharmacy Initiative**. Interested parties can access the RFPs here.

Next Steps for Your Organization

The ODH is currently in the "infrastructure phase." Providers interested in the **Rural Health Workforce Pipeline** or the **Pharmacy Initiative** should immediately review the open RFPs to meet upcoming deadlines. Reach out to Daphne Kackloudis or a member of Shumaker's Health Law Team for assistance.

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