

Lost in the Woods: Fixing Rural Health Care

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The Problem

82 Rural hospitals closed since 2010

700 risk closure over next 10 years

Over **20%** of Americans live in rural zip codes, but only **4%** of doctors practice there

1 in 8 rural African-Americans live in a county with no hospital

A Desire for Change

Affordability: All 8 klatches brought up rising healthcare prices

Quality: 6 of 8 klatches brought up concerns over low health care quality in rural communities

Accessibility: 7 of 8 klatches expressed concern over distance necessary to travel for quality care

Surprising politics: many self-identified Trump Voters/Republicans expressed support for ambitious fixes, even large scale government spending

The People

 **8 klatches** in diners, coffee shops, garages, etc.

 **53** total participants

 Age range from mid twenties to seventies

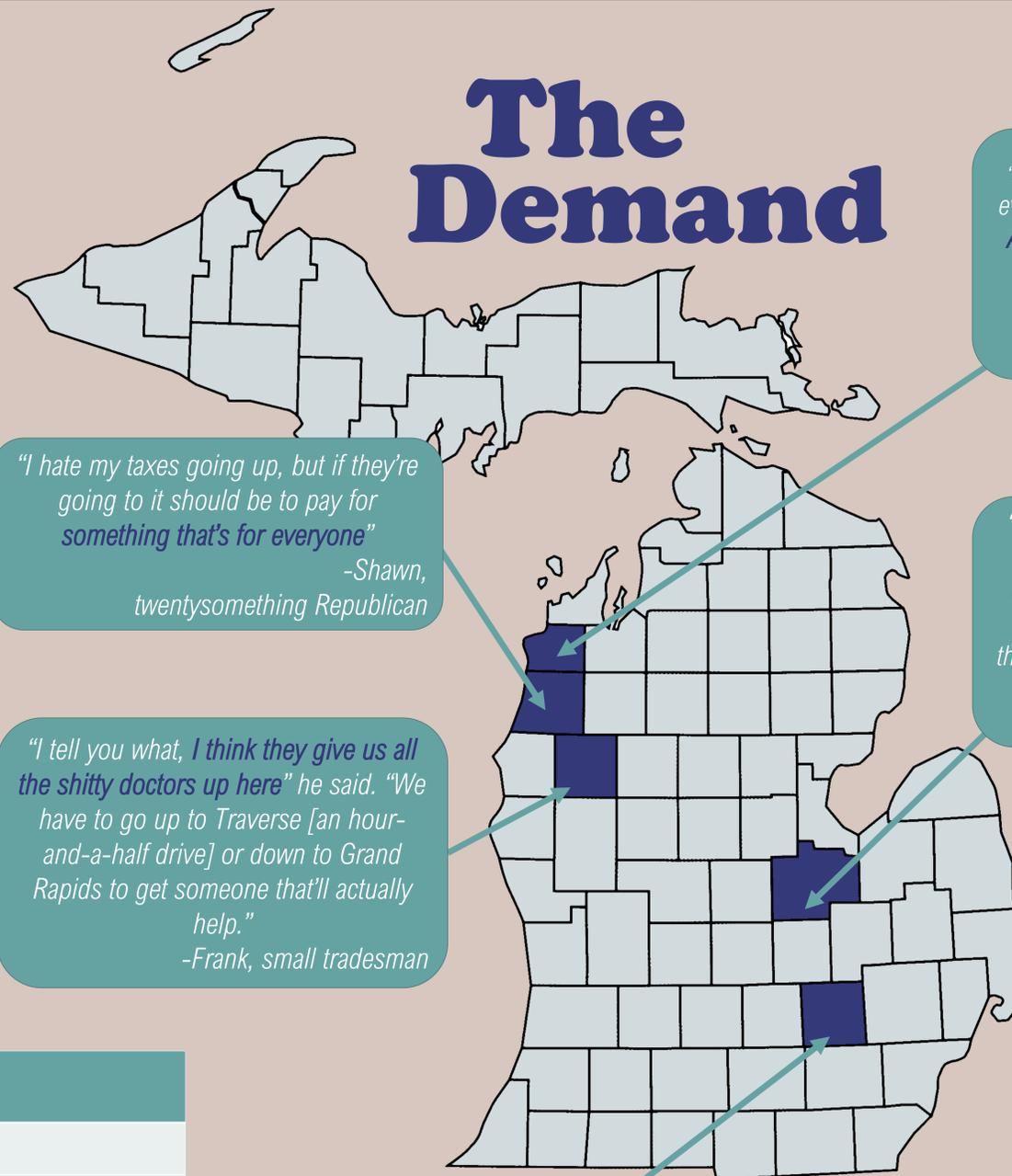
 Majority self identified Trump voters

 Even mix of self-identified Republicans and Democrats

 Majority male

 Majority employed in working class professions

The Demand



"A lot of people around here can't afford it [insurance]. And even the ones who got it can't get to the doctor half the time. And if you need some kind of special treatment...forget it. You've got to drive a couple hours down to Grand Rapids probably, and that's if you can get an appointment."

-Don, retiree

"I hate my taxes going up, but if they're going to it should be to pay for something that's for everyone"

-Shawn, twentysomething Republican

"Look man, I hate paying taxes, because I don't trust the government to do anything right. But these hospitals, they're run by private companies, and they're not getting it right either. They don't care about you, they just want to take your money. I wouldn't even mind [paying higher taxes] so much, if it meant I could go to a good doctor when I need it. Right now, first of all, there's not many good doctors around here, and second of all it's too expensive even if you find one. Most people, you can't even afford to go unless you're real sick already."

-Gary, Trump voter

"I tell you what, I think they give us all the shitty doctors up here" he said. "We have to go up to Traverse [an hour-and-a-half drive] or down to Grand Rapids to get someone that'll actually help."

-Frank, small tradesman

"I was against ObamaCare but I don't think taking away people's insurance is right either. I just don't want to be paying for somebody else's when I don't see [any benefit] If they're taking money out of my paycheck on it, it should be less expensive for me...and everybody that needs it"

-Linda, stay at home mom, Republican

The Solutions

Proposal	Affordability	Access	Quality
Decouple Care from the Profit Incentive to allow rural hospitals operating on razor thin margins to make capital investments that have been proven to lead to long term sustainability			
Fix Reimbursement the ACA's effort to promote preventative care created punitive fines disproportionately affecting rural providers. Eliminate or subsidize these fines for hospitals in rural counties.			
Improve Telemedicine: Expand broadband to reach the 30% of rural Michiganders without it. Implement a nationwide telemedicine parity law.			
Implement Rural Medical Scholars Program similar to Alabama's which specifically recruits and gives scholarships to medical students from rural counties who wish to return to practice.			