

December 11, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United State Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: URGE CONGRESS TO INCLUDE TELEHEALTH IN END OF YEAR PACKAGE &
EXTEND FLEXIBILITES THROUGH THE END OF 2021

Dear Congressional Leaders:

We applaud Congress for its recent steps to increase access to health care services via telehealth. While we seek permanent reforms to enable Medicare beneficiaries to continue to access services via telehealth once the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) ends, we write today to express our support for provisions, proposed by a bipartisan group of Senators, that would extend temporary telehealth flexibilities until the end of 2021 in an end-of-year package to fund the federal government. We believe this extension is a reasonable policy that will help provide certainty for patients and providers as we work together on permanent reform in 2021.

The current COVID-19 PHE has ushered in a new era of health care as patients and providers have realized the benefits of telehealth. This unprecedented expansion in access to telehealth was made possible across the country in large part because of federal and state decisionmakers taking the initiative to enact commonsense policies that remove arbitrary restrictions to care and improve patient choice. Since many of these needed policies are contingent upon the PHE, millions of Americans risk losing access to vital health care services unless you and your colleagues takes specific actions. Additionally, the continued risk of telehealth flexibilities ending with each subsequent 90-day renewal of the PHE adds additional uncertainty to an already strained health care delivery system. Patients and their health care professionals should not have to worry if they will be able to continue to receive or deliver necessary care.

As you know, telehealth has long been a bipartisan priority, as evidenced through the widely supported bipartisan, bicameral *CONNECT for Health Act* and recent legislation focused specifically on meeting patient needs during and after COVID-19. Given the clear and obvious benefit of telehealth during COVID-19, we continue to strongly support passage of the *Telehealth Modernization Act* (S. 4375, H.R. 8727) and the *Protecting Access to Post-COVID Telehealth Act* (H.R. 7663).

It is critical that, in the absence of enactment of these permanent policies, the telehealth flexibilities during the PHE are extended until the end of next calendar year in order for patients

to continue to receive care when and where they need it. These policies include: removing geographic restrictions; allowing the location of the patient (including the patient's home) to be an originating site; giving HHS the authority to determine appropriate telehealth services and providers; and allowing Federally Qualified Health Centers, Rural Health Clinics, and Critical Access Hospitals to furnish telehealth and be fairly reimbursed.

We urge Congress to include telehealth in the end of year package and strongly support, in the absence of permanent reform, an extension of the temporary telehealth flexibilities until the end of 2021. Thank you for your continued leadership on this important issue, and we look forward to working with you to ensure continued access to vital health care services.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Connected Care
American Telemedicine Association
College of Healthcare Information Management Executives
Connected Health Initiative
eHealth Initiative
Health Innovation Alliance
HIMSS
PCHAlliance