



RE: ATA PROPOSALS FOR TELEHEALTH REFORM

President-Elect Joseph Biden and Transition Team,

On behalf of the American Telemedicine Association (ATA), I would like to extend to you our most sincere congratulations on winning the 2020 election. The ATA, the only organization exclusively committed to the advancement of telehealth, is excited to work with you and your administration in the coming years to ensure the American people have access to quality care when and where they need it. On behalf of the ATA, and the over 400 organizations we represent, I am writing to share with you the ATA's core policy principles and to offer our organization as a resource as you begin to consider telehealth policies.

As you know, the current COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) has ushered in a new era of healthcare as patients and providers have more fully realized the benefits of telehealth than ever before. This unprecedented expansion in access to remote care has been 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.

Alarmingly, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the health and health care access inequity across our nation. As we have struggled to combat the virus, millions of Americans have been disproportionately impacted depending on their race, geography, or economic status. A core policy principle of the ATA is expanding access to underserved and at-risk populations as we believe telehealth can help bridge the health care gaps in this country, ensuring all Americans have access to appropriate care during a pandemic or not. By ensuring federal rules do not arbitrarily limit access to care and by supporting policies that expand access to broadband, we can work together to address this problematic health trend.

Moving forward, as the United States continues to combat COVID-19 and prepares to transition into a new normal, the ATA stands ready to work with you to ensure patients throughout the country, in every state and jurisdiction, continue to have the choice of accessing telehealth in a post-pandemic world.



The expanded use of telehealth to combat COVID-19 has presented additional evidence that, when used appropriately, telehealth and the use of safe and effective technologies to deliver remote health care, improves health care quality and outcomes at reduced costs. The new realities of health care delivery in a post-COVID-19 world will necessitate the continued use of telehealth to ensure that everyone has access to the care that they need when they need it and to maximize health care resources. We encourage you to support policies that empower providers with the ability to use synchronous, asynchronous, remote monitoring technologies, and future technologies to advance patient access to health care.

In your first 100 days, your Administration should take critical action to indicate that telehealth is a priority and that providers and patients may finally rely on policies that permanently support a telehealth infrastructure. The ATA outlines below the top policy priorities, which should be enacted as soon as possible. However, because many of the priorities require coordination with Congress, which we recognize takes additional time, we recommend a single immediate action to be taken in your first 100 days while the other priorities are also advanced: **telehealth flexibilities granted during the PHE should be extended at least one year following the end of the PHE to give time for Congress and your administration to evaluate details around policies that should remain permanent.**

As you look to support more long-term telehealth policies in the months and years to come, I ask that you consider the ATA as a trusted resource and that you allow your policy process to be informed by the following commonsense policy principles:

1. Ensure Patient Choice, Access, and Satisfaction
2. Enhance Provider Autonomy
3. Expand Reimbursement to Incentivize 21st Century Virtual Care
4. Enable Healthcare Delivery Across State Lines
5. Ensure Access to Non-Physician Providers
6. Expand Access for Underserved and At-risk Populations
7. Support Seniors and Expand "Aging in Place"
8. Protect Patient Privacy and Mitigate Cybersecurity Risks



9. Ensure Program Integrity

As you prioritize actions your administration can take on telehealth, we urge you to consider the [ATA's Permanent Policy Recommendations](#) to inform your policy decisions. This resource offers a detailed overview of flexibilities granted during the COVID-19 PHE, whether permanently enacting those changes require legislative or regulatory actions, and the ATA's recommendations on what should be prioritized to ensure telehealth access post-pandemic. As described in the document, many of the major policies that will enable access to telehealth following the PHE will require specific actions by Congress. For this reason, we encourage you to work with your colleagues on Capitol Hill on this bipartisan issue to ensure Americans are not denied access to care. As you engage Congress, we also refer you to [ATA's Federal Telehealth Legislative Tracker](#), which outlines the specific bills the ATA supports to achieve the goals of increased access.

Once the COVID-19 PHE ultimately ends, millions of Americans will lose access to telehealth unless Congress and you take specific action. To ensure patients do not lose their ability to choose the modality of care that works best for them, the ATA strongly urges you to quickly enact policies that make telehealth flexibilities created during the COVID-19 pandemic permanent. Specifically, the ATA supports legislation that would expand the use of telehealth in Medicare beyond the current national crisis by:

- Permanently removing geographic restrictions
- Allowing the patients' home as an originating site
- Enhancing Health and Human Services (HHS) authority to determine appropriate telehealth services and providers
- Ensuring Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) can furnish telehealth, and
- Making permanent HHS's temporary waiver authority for future emergencies.

There are a number of pending bills led by bipartisan telehealth champions in Congress that would achieve many or all of these goals, as outlined in the tracker.

We ask that your transition team consider meeting with us to discuss how we can advance these telehealth priorities. Thank you very much for your consideration of bipartisan policies to ensure Americans continue to access telehealth in 2021 and



beyond. The ATA stands ready to work with your administration to advance telehealth access in the days and months to come. If you have any questions, please contact the ATA Director of Public Policy Kyle Zebley at kzebley@americantelemed.org. We look forward to working closely with you and your team in the years to come.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ann Mond Johnson", followed by a period.

Ann Mond Johnson
CEO
American Telemedicine Association