



January 14, 2021

The Honorable George L. Barker
Pocahontas Building
Room No: E619
Senate of Virginia
P. O. Box 396
Richmond, VA 23218

RE: SUPPORT FOR SB 1338

Dear Senator Barker,

On behalf of the American Telemedicine Association (ATA) and the over 400 organizations we represent, I am writing you to applaud you for your work on SB 1338, which would expand coverage to Virginians who utilize remote patient monitoring services for their health care needs.

The ATA is the only national organization completely focused on advancing telehealth and is committed to ensuring that everyone has access to safe, affordable, and high-quality care when and where they need it. This empowers the health care system to provide more services to more patients in an efficacious manner. The ATA represents a broad and inclusive coalition of technology solution providers and payers, as well as partner organizations and alliances, working to advance industry adoption of telehealth, promote responsible policy, advocate for government and market normalization, and provide education and resources to help integrate virtual care into emerging, value-based modalities.

SB 1338 serves as an important addition to the framework for the regulation of telehealth in Virginia. We strongly support the provisions in this bill which require public and private insurers to cover remote patient monitoring services. The ATA seeks to establish a health care environment in which patients have access to the same extent of coverage for health care services delivered via telehealth as they would if the care were provided in person. This will make it easier for Virginians to access the affordable, first-rate telehealth care they desire without having to worry about potential financial burdens.

We also strongly support the expansion of the the definition of remote patient monitoring to include *both* digital and telecommunications technology used to collect medical and other forms of health data from patients in one location and electronically transmitting that information to a provider in a different location for assessment and recommendations. We believe that this expanded definition provides a holistic basis from which Virginians will be able to access care delivered by remote patient monitoring services.



Importantly, such technology amplifies patient care by allowing providers to continually monitor, collect and analyze a patient's physiologic data when outside their office to create a care management plan related to a chronic or acute health condition. In addition, remote patient monitoring brings cost-savings by reducing hospital readmissions and emergency department visits. Additional financial benefits include lower operational costs, such as a reduced number of hospital bed days and reduced overall resource utilization.

While there are some important clinical differences that should be recognized and regulated appropriately, the ATA wants to emphasize its commitment to promoting technology-neutral language in telehealth-related policy. We urge you to continue to consider the unintended consequences of language which gives preferences to specific modalities and technologies rather than ensuring all providers, whether virtual or in-person, meet the standard of care. As patients and consumers seek more convenient and affordable ways to access health care, regulatory frameworks should not mandate that providers always use certain types of technology or modalities to deliver virtual care. The expanded use of telehealth to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic has provided additional evidence to demonstrate that, when used appropriately, telehealth and the use of safe and efficient technologies to deliver virtual care to patients improves health care quality and outcomes while reducing the cost of that care.

The ATA is confident that the passage of this bill will increase access to affordable, high-quality care, bolster the efficiency of Virginia's health care industry, and allow more patients to get the care they want, need, and deserve. These advancements are essential for the continued growth and use of telehealth technologies and will benefit patients and practitioners alike.

Again, we thank you for your support of telehealth. Particularly during a global pandemic, it is critical that Virginians can pursue as many avenues to care as possible within the appropriate standard of care. Please do not hesitate to let us know how we can be helpful to your efforts to advance common sense telehealth policy in Virginia. If you have any questions or would like to further discuss the telehealth industry's perspective, please contact me at kzebley@americantelemed.org.

Kind regards,

Kyle Zebley
Public Policy Director
American Telemedicine Association

