



January 27, 2021

The Honorable Dennis Lenz
Montana State House of Representatives
1301 E 6th Ave
Helena, MT 59601

The Honorable Lola Sheldon-Galloway
Montana State House of Representatives
1301 E 6th Ave
Helena, MT 59601

The Honorable Jessica Karjala
Montana State House of Representatives
1301 E 6th Ave
Helena, MT 59601

RE: ATA SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 43

Dear Chair Lenz and Vice-Chairs Sheldon-Galloway and Karjala,

On behalf of the American Telemedicine Association (ATA) and the over 400 organizations we represent, I am writing to voice our strong support for House Bill 43, which serves as an omnibus bill promoting the expansion of Montana's telemedicine industry.

The ATA is the only national organization whose mission revolves solely around the advancement of telehealth in the United States. Our utmost priority is ensuring that Americans have the ability to receive affordable, high-quality health care at any place and any time. The expansion of telehealth infrastructure around the country eases strain on the overburdened health care system, enabling it to provide care for millions more patients every year in an efficient and effective manner. The ATA represents a diverse and expansive coalition of technology solution providers and payers, as well as partner organizations and alliances, working together to promote the implementation of telehealth across the country, endorse responsible telehealth policy, encourage government and market



normalization, and deliver education and resources designed to further the integration of virtual care through the use of various innovative technologies.

House Bill 43 serves as an important addition to Montana's regulatory framework regarding telemedicine. The proposed legislation mandates that public employee benefit plans and self-insured student health plans must cover health services provided via telemedicine and amends the definition of telehealth to be more technology-neutral.

The ATA strongly supports House Bill 43 for several reasons. First, the expanded coverage proposed in the bill allows an increased number of Montanans to access quality health care services provided via telemedicine and prevent the denial of claims for covered services because telemedicine was used in lieu of an in-person encounter. The ATA applauds your commitment to creating more navigable pathways for Montanans to receive the care they want and need.

Second, the bill's revised definition of telemedicine explicitly states practitioners' ability to utilize real-time and store-and-forward technologies to provide telemedicine services. This includes audio-only communication, emails, and facsimile transmissions. As patients and consumers seek more convenient and affordable ways to access health care, regulatory frameworks should not mandate which types of technologies are more appropriate than others in the delivery of health care services so long as the standard of care is being met. Several of the approved modalities in Montana's new definition of telemedicine, which can be utilized even with low bandwidth connections, provide patients who lack access to reliable broadband internet with the ability to communicate effectively with their providers. Most pertinently, the expanded use of telehealth to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic has evidenced the usefulness of an assortment of technologies in the practice of telemedicine, allowing practitioners to triage patients with symptoms of the disease and maintain continuous care for those without COVID-19. The permissive definition offered by Montana's legislature allows practitioners and patients to enjoy the full benefits of innovative telemedicine technologies.



Regarding the issue of reimbursement for healthcare services rendered through telehealth technologies, the ATA encourages state policymakers to set rational guidelines that are both fair to the provider of such services and reflect the cost savings the effective use of telehealth technologies offers to the healthcare system.

Again, we thank you for your strong interest in and support for telehealth. We urge the Montana legislature to pass House Bill 43 for the advancement of telehealth in your state. In the context of the ongoing pandemic, it is critical that we codify policies that will make it easier for Montanans to access affordable, quality care from the safety of their homes.

Please do not hesitate to let us know how we can be helpful to your efforts to advance common-sense telemedicine policy in Montana. If you have any questions or would like to discuss further the telehealth industry's perspective, please contact me at kzebley@americantelemed.org.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kyle Zebley".

Kyle Zebley

Public Policy Director

American Telemedicine Association