



January 29, 2021

The Honorable Mark Pearson
Chairman, New Hampshire House Health, Human Services & Elderly Affairs Committee
New Hampshire House of Representatives
107 N Main St., Seat #1009
Concord, NH 03303

The Honorable William Marsh
Vice-Chairman, New Hampshire House Health, Human Services & Elderly Affairs
Committee
New Hampshire House of Representatives
107 N Main St., Seat #2031
Concord, NH 03303

RE: ATA OPPOSITION TO HOUSE BILL 602

Dear Chairman Pearson and Vice-Chairman Marsh,

On behalf of the American Telemedicine Association (ATA) and the over 400 organizations we represent, I am writing you to express our concerns about House Bill 602, which amends the definition of telemedicine as well as the definition of Medicaid and commercial insurance reimbursement for telemedicine services in New Hampshire.

The ATA is the only national organization whose mission revolves solely around the advancement of telemedicine in the United States. Our utmost priority is ensuring that Americans have the ability to receive affordable, quality health care when and where they need it. The expansion of telemedicine 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.

The proposed legislation revises the definition of telemedicine, excluding audio-only telephone modalities from the list of technologies which qualify as acceptable in the delivery of telemedicine services for health care professions. House Bill 602 represents a significant step backward for telemedicine in New Hampshire. As patients search for more convenient and affordable ways to access quality health care, state policies should be expanding rather than restricting the modalities used to deliver care. If the health care professional providing telemedicine services determines based on professional judgment that the standard of care can be met, the professional should be able to use an assortment of innovative technologies to provide care to their patients. Prohibiting the use of audio-only telephone capabilities in the delivery of telemedicine services would eliminate effective technologies that are in use in some efficacious instances to treat New Hampshire patients today.

Additionally, this bill would prevent New Hampshire residents from enjoying the full benefits of innovative telemedicine technologies. Throughout New Hampshire, there remains a widespread shortage of health care workers. According to New Hampshire Public Radio, there were over 100 vacant positions at community health care centers across the state in 2019 and 2020. Audio-only telephone technologies help overworked practitioners this gap, connecting doctors and patients at any place and any time. Furthermore, over 27,000 New Hampshire residents do not have access to the reliable, high-speed internet capabilities necessary to utilize real-time, audiovisual technologies. The use of audio-only telephone modalities, which are accessible even with low bandwidth, allows these underserved and unserved individuals to receive the same level of health care as those with access to high-speed internet connections. We urge you and



your colleagues to consider the potential consequences of the discriminatory language proposed in House Bill 602, including the construction of arbitrary and clinically unnecessary barriers to your constituents' access to the health care they need and deserve.

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

In the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential to make it easier for New Hampshire residents to access affordable, quality care through telemedicine. We believe that House Bill 602 would make it substantially more difficult for patients in the state to receive this care, placing the state among the most regressive in terms of telemedicine policy. We encourage you and your colleagues to implement telemedicine-related policies that empower providers to utilize an assortment of technologies and allow for flexibility regarding future technological developments. Please let us know if there is anything that we can do to assist you in your efforts to adopt practical telehealth policy in your state. If you have any questions or would like to engage in additional discussion regarding the telemedicine industry's perspective, please contact me at kzebley@americantelemed.org.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kyle Zebley".

Kyle Zebley
Public Policy Director
American Telemedicine Association