



March 22, 2021

The Honorable LaToya Greenwood
Chairwoman, Illinois House Health Care Availability & Accessibility Committee
Stratton Office Building
401 S. Spring Street, Room 254-W
Springfield, IL 62706

The Honorable Mary E. Flowers
Vice-Chairwoman, Illinois House Health Care Availability & Accessibility Committee
Illinois House of Representatives
401 S. 2nd St., Room 300
Springfield, IL 62706

RE: ATA SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 3498

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 3498, which would expand Illinois residents' access to telehealth services.

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 access to affordable, high-quality health care whenever and wherever they need it. 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.

The ATA supports House Bill 3498 for several reasons. First, our organization applauds the legislature for its efforts to adopt a technologically permissive definition of telehealth. The amended definition of telehealth allows for the use of synchronous and asynchronous (or store-and-forward) technologies as well as remote patient monitoring, e-visits, and virtual check-ins in the delivery of telehealth services. Across the country, providers are relying increasingly on asynchronous telehealth technologies to establish patient relationships, perform patient evaluations, and prescribe medication in many fields. In addition, providers are utilizing remote patient monitoring technologies to bring care into the home, where providers can continually monitor, collect, and analyze a patient's physiologic data while creating care management plans for patients, especially those with chronic conditions.

As patients and consumers seek more convenient and affordable ways to access health care, state policies should not mandate which types of technologies are more appropriate than others in the delivery of health care services. If the health care professional providing telemedicine services determines, based on professional judgment, that the standard of care can be met, then the professional should be able to use an assortment of appropriate technologies to provide care to their patients. The changes proposed in House



Bill 3498 would enable providers to use clinical judgment to determine which telehealth modality is most appropriate and sufficient to treat the condition presented by the patient, all while upholding the standard of care.

Additionally, the use of asynchronous technologies, which can be utilized even with low bandwidth connections, allows patients who lack access to reliable internet connections to communicate effectively with their providers conveniently from home. Across Illinois, 727,000 individuals do not have consistent access to high-speed internet connections. By enabling Illinois residents to receive telehealth services through the use of asynchronous modalities, the legislature ensures that unserved and underserved Illinoisans receive the same level of access to quality health care as those who have the ability to utilize more reliable broadband connections.

The expanded use of telehealth to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic has evidenced the usefulness of an assortment of appropriate 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 the legislation will allow practitioners and patients to enjoy the full benefits of these innovative telehealth technologies and will put your state in an ideal position to adapt to any future technological advances in the field of telehealth.

The ATA also supports the legislature's efforts to expand patient access to affordable, high-quality care by mandating that public and private insurance plans provide coverage for services provided via the appropriate telehealth technologies in the same manner as any other benefits covered under the policy. This provision would make it easier for Illinois residents to access quality health care at any place and any time without having to worry about the potential financial burdens associated with receiving that care.

Regarding the rate of reimbursement for telehealth services, the ATA maintains that state policymakers should set rational guidelines that are both fair to the provider of such services and reflect the cost savings offered to the health care system by the effective use of telehealth technologies.

We urge you and your colleagues to support House Bill 3498 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 Illinoisans 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 telehealth policy in Illinois. If you have any questions or would like to discuss further the telemedicine industry's perspective, please contact me at kzebley@americantelemed.org.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kyle Zebley", written in a cursive style.

Kyle Zebley
Public Policy Director
American Telemedicine Association