



June 3, 2021

The Honorable John DiSanto
Chair, Pennsylvania Senate Banking & Insurance Committee
Pennsylvania State Senate
501 N 3rd St., Room 168
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Sharif Street
Minority Chair, Pennsylvania Senate Banking & Insurance Committee
Pennsylvania State Senate
501 N 3rd St., Room 535
Harrisburg, PA 17120

RE: ATA SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 705

Chair DiSanto and Minority Chair Sharif:

On behalf of the American Telemedicine Association and the over 400 organizations we represent, I am writing to voice our support for Senate Bill 705.

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, first-rate 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 telemedicine across the country, endorse responsible telemedicine 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.

Senate Bill 705 represents a step forward for Pennsylvania's state telemedicine policy. The proposed legislation creates a technology-neutral definition of telemedicine, enabling practitioners to use synchronous modalities, asynchronous technologies, and remote patient monitoring technologies in the delivery of health care services. Additionally, the bill would require health insurance policies to provide coverage for telemedicine delivered by a participating network provider who provides a covered service via telemedicine consistent with the insurer's medical policies.

The ATA supports the legislature's adoption of a technology-neutral definition of telemedicine. The definition aptly captures how telemedicine providers in Pennsylvania and across the country are relying increasingly on robust asynchronous (or store-and forward) telemedicine technologies in addition to more traditional, synchronous (or real-time) technologies to perform patient evaluations in a variety of fields.



Asynchronous technologies are critical to the industry as they are used to transmit a patient's health data, vital signs, digital diagnostic images, and other physiologic data quickly and conveniently. Additionally, the use of asynchronous technologies, which can be utilized even with mediocre bandwidth connections, allows patients who lack access to reliable internet connections to communicate effectively with their providers from the comfort of their homes.

In addition, providers rely increasingly on remote patient monitoring to enhance patient care outside the hospital or doctor's office. For example, this technology allows providers to monitor, collect, and analyze a patient's physiologic data from any location on a real-time basis, enabling them to better understand a patient's response to treatment, track improvements, or be warned sooner of deteriorations.

However, the ATA would like to emphasize its commitment to a technology-neutral definition of telemedicine that would enable providers to utilize the full range of appropriate modalities, including instant messages and emails. As patients and consumers seek out more convenient and affordable means by which to access their health care services, state policymakers should not mandate which technologies are more appropriate than others in the delivery of telemedicine services. Instead, they should defer this decision to licensed medical professionals who can determine which technologies are appropriate to meet the standard of care for the condition presented by the patient. It is appropriate for the legislature to put in place patient safety guardrails; however, those should be firmly tied to the standard of care.

The ATA also applauds the legislature's efforts to expand Pennsylvanians' access to affordable, high-quality care by requiring health insurance policies to cover telemedicine services provided by a participating network provider, prohibiting health insurance policies from excluding a health care service for coverage because the service is provided through telemedicine. This provision will make it easier for Pennsylvania residents to access quality health care easily and effectively without having to worry about the potential financial burdens associated with receiving that care. As far as the rate of reimbursement for telemedicine services is concerned, 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 telemedicine technologies.

We thank you for your support of telemedicine in Pennsylvania. We urge you and your colleagues to pass Senate Bill 705 in the interest of expanding Pennsylvania residents' access to affordable, high-quality health care. All in all, Senate Bill 705 reflects telemedicine policy enacted across the country. Please let us know how we can be helpful in your efforts to adopt sensible telemedicine policy in Pennsylvania. 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".

Kyle Zebley
Public Policy Director
American Telemedicine Association