



March 21, 2022

The Honorable Daniel B. Verdin, III  
Chairman, South Carolina Senate Medical Affairs Committee  
South Carolina State Senate  
L. Marion Gressette Building  
1101 Pendleton St., Room #412  
Columbia, SC 29201

**RE: ATA ACTION SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 1179**

Dear Chairman Verdin:

On behalf of ATA Action, I am writing you to express our support for Senate Bill 1179.

ATA Action, the American Telemedicine Association's affiliated trade association focused on advocacy, advances policy to ensure all individuals have permanent access to telehealth services across the care continuum. ATA Action supports the enactment of state and federal telehealth coverage and fair payment policies to secure telehealth access for all Americans, including those in rural and underserved communities. ATA Action recognizes that telehealth and virtual care have the potential to truly transform the health care delivery system – by improving patient outcomes, enhancing safety and effectiveness of care, addressing health disparities, and reducing costs – if only allowed to flourish.

Senate Bill 1179 serves as a rational expansion of South Carolina's state telehealth policy. If passed, the proposed legislation would grant licensure reciprocity to social workers, professional counsellors, marriage and family therapists, and licensed psycho-educational specialists who are licensed in other states or jurisdictions, enabling them to provide telehealth services to South Carolina patients more efficiently and effectively than ever before.

ATA Action applauds the Legislature for permitting qualified, out-of-state mental health care providers to deliver health care services to South Carolina patients without needing to obtain a South Carolina license. ATA Action believes that patients should be able to receive virtual care from their preferred providers – regardless of that provider's physical location – so long as the provider is licensed and in good standing in his or her home state, is utilizing the appropriate technology to uphold the established standard of care, and can still be held accountable by the appropriate boards and state agencies should any issues arise from treatment of a South Carolina patient. By granting out-of-state mental health care providers who maintain good standing in their own states the ability to treat South Carolina patients, the state will take an important step toward leveraging technology to bridge the gap of provider shortages. Policies which enable out-of-state providers to practice at the top of their licenses and deliver high-quality health care via

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telehealth remove arbitrary geographical barriers that limit patients' access to the health care services they want, need, and deserve.

Permissive policies such as the one contemplated in Senate Bill 1179 have been implemented in states across the country in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, finding great success in the process. Governors and legislatures across the country responded quickly to the spread of COVID-19 by providing licensure flexibilities that allowed out-of-state providers who were licensed and in good standing in their home states to practice without having to navigate the often-burdensome licensure requirements of other states. As a result, patients with non-emergent conditions and behavioral health challenges were given the opportunity to receive timely care via telehealth technologies not only for COVID-related illnesses but also for a myriad of other chronic and acute issues. In response to these flexibilities, our member organizations leveraged their technology platforms and provider networks to increase the supply of health care professionals to meet surges in demand, ultimately serving millions of Americans who would otherwise never have received care. Notably, there was not an increase in patient complaints nor reported harm to patients from the implementation of these policies nationwide.

Thank you for your support for telehealth. We encourage you and your colleagues to pass Senate Bill 1179 and consider expanding these licensure flexibilities to all health care providers – not just those working in fields related to mental health – in the future. Such policies will ensure that South Carolinians have access to high-quality, affordable health care whenever and wherever they need it. Please let us know if there is anything that we can do to assist you in your efforts to adopt practical telehealth policy in South Carolina. If you have any questions or would like to engage in additional discussion regarding the telehealth industry's perspective, please contact me at [kzebley@ataaction.org](mailto:kzebley@ataaction.org).

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kyle Zebley", is written over a light gray circular watermark that contains the text "ATA ACTION".

Kyle Zebley  
Executive Director  
ATA Action

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