



April 19, 2022

The Honorable Chris Hansen
Chair, Colorado Senate Appropriations Committee
Colorado State Senate
200 E Colfax Ave.
Denver, CO 80203

The Honorable Rachel Zenzinger
Vice Chair, Colorado Senate Appropriations Committee
Colorado State Senate
200 E Colfax Ave., Room #346
Denver, CO 80203

RE: ATA ACTION COMMENTS ON SENATE BILL 22-181

Dear Chair Hansen and Vice Chair Zenzinger:

On behalf of ATA Action, I am writing you to comment on Senate Bill 22-181 as it relates to telehealth.

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 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 22-181 would require the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) in the Department of Human Services to create and implement a behavioral health care provider workforce plan by September 1, 2022. Among other things, the proposed legislation would also require the Division of Professions and Occupations in the Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) to make recommendations to expand the behavioral health care practice through telehealth.

ATA Action sees this workforce plan as an opportunity to make recommendations that will promote the proliferation of telehealth in Colorado and ensure that Colorado patients have access to high-quality, affordable care on a permanent basis. During the COVID-19 pandemic, patients across the country benefitted from the expansion of telehealth services, receiving physical and mental health services whenever and wherever they needed it. Innovative telehealth technologies – including real-time, audio-visual modalities, asynchronous technologies, and remote patient

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monitoring devices – connected more patients to more providers than ever before. In the process of prompting these connections, telehealth technologies eliminated arbitrary geographic barriers between patients and their preferred providers, saved patients time and money by allowing them to receive their health care from work or at home, and enabled patients in rural and underserved communities the ability to access care easily and efficiently.

With the country still suffering through an unprecedented mental health crisis, it is essential that legislatures and state agencies recognize the benefits that a permissive approach to telehealth would afford patients. Enabling behavioral health providers to use the full range of appropriate telehealth technologies when delivering telehealth services, allowing for the establishment of patient-provider relationships via telehealth technologies, and granting licensure flexibilities to behavioral health providers licensed and in good standing in other states are just a few provisions which would expand the behavioral health care workforce in Colorado and make it easier for providers to reach patients in need.

Thank you for your support for telehealth. We urge the Legislature to consider these points when outlining the objectives of the behavioral health workforce in the interest of expanding Colorado patients' access to affordable, high-quality behavioral health care. Please consider ATA Action a resource for the work of the task force. 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.

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