



January 25, 2023

The Honorable Karla Eslinger
Chair, Governmental Accountability Committee
Missouri Senate
201 W. Capitol Ave., Rm. 320
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

RE: ATA ACTION SUPPORT OF SB79

Dear Chair Eslinger and members of the Governmental Accountability Committee,

On behalf of ATA Action, I am writing you to express our support of SB 79 relating 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.

ATA Action believes SB 79 is a step forward to enabling and delivering efficient, 21st century nursing care using digital health technologies. This legislation takes the important step to allow advanced practice nurses (APRNs) licensed in Missouri to practice-- both in-person and through telehealth services-- to the full extent of their education and training, thereby aligning Missouri with how a growing number of states treat APRNs. ATA Action strongly believes that healthcare providers at all levels must be able to participate effectively across care teams and leverage telehealth to reach patients where they are. Utilizing telehealth nursing improves continuity of care for both urban and rural patients, especially the Missourians in primary care shortage areas who may not have access otherwise.

Importantly, the legislation also removes many existing barriers to APRN practice in the state, including the outdated and clinically unnecessary requirement that an APRN's collaborating physician must be located within 75 geographic miles of their collaborating physician. This type of artificial regulatory burden is particularly onerous for APRNs using telehealth and does not contribute to quality, patient safety, or improved outcomes. Across the country APRNs collaborate remotely with members of the care team, whether they are 1 mile or 76 miles or over 100 miles apart. Removing Missouri's arbitrary geographic proximity requirement for APRNs – as the Governor Parson did without incident during COVID-19—will help expand the reach of the healthcare workforce in Missouri and better ensure timely access to care.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We urge you to support SB 79 to expand Missouri patients' access to high-quality, affordable health care and drive better care coordination throughout the state. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the telehealth industry's perspective further, please contact me at kzebley@ataaction.org.

ATA ACTION

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Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kyle Zebley", is written over a light gray dotted rectangular background.

Kyle Zebley
Executive Director
ATA Action