



July 26, 2023

The Honorable Joseph Vitale  
Chair, Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee  
New Jersey Senate  
State House Box 099  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0099

The Honorable Fred Madden  
Vice-Chair, Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee  
New Jersey Senate  
State House Box 099  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0099

CC: The Honorable Linda R. Greenstein  
Senator, District 14  
New Jersey Senate  
State House Box 099  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0099

### **ATA ACTION SUPPORT FOR S4007**

Dear Chair Vitale, Vice-Chair Madden, and Members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee,

On behalf of ATA Action, I am writing you to express support for New Jersey S4007.

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.

In particular, ATA Action supports the inclusion of telehealth services as an option for deaf patients seeking mental health services within S4007, the *Right to Mental Health for Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing Act*. Telehealth can be an important component in addressing the health needs of deaf and hard of hearing patients. Considering that as many as 1 in 5 U.S. adults have some form of hearing loss, there are many patients who stand to benefit from

#### **ATA ACTION**

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increased access to telehealth when tailored to fit their needs.<sup>1</sup> Researchers have long understood the “viability and effectiveness of telehealth as a means of health care delivery to the deaf population,”<sup>2</sup> however, “Failure to explicitly account for people with a disability in the design, implementation, and policy dimensions of telehealth will lead to further marginalization and poor health outcomes for the more than 61 million Americans with disabilities.”<sup>3</sup> By including telehealth in the expansion of mental health services within S4007, the legislature takes an important step toward reducing inequities in telehealth access overall.

The American Telemedicine Association also provides a more in-depth discussion of this topic, entitled “[\*Ensuring Accessible Telehealth for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Patients\*](#).”

Thank you for your support of telehealth and we encourage you to pass this legislation as currently drafted. Please let us know if there is anything that we can do to assist you in your efforts to adopt practical telehealth policy in New Jersey.

Sincerely,

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

Kyle Zebley  
Executive Director  
ATA Action

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<sup>1</sup> Lin FR, Niparko JK, Ferrucci L. Hearing loss prevalence in the United States. Arch Intern Med. 2011 Nov 14;171(20):1851-2. doi: 10.1001/archinternmed.2011.506. PMID: 22083573; PMCID: PMC3564588.

<sup>2</sup> Jaime A. B. Wilson, M. Gawain Wells, Telehealth and the Deaf: A Comparison Study, The Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education, Volume 14, Issue 3, Summer 2009, Pages 386–402, <https://doi.org/10.1093/deafed/enp008>.

<sup>3</sup> Rupa S Valdez and others, Ensuring full participation of people with disabilities in an era of telehealth, Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association, Volume 28, Issue 2, February 2021, Pages 389–392, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jamia/ocaa297>.