



March 19, 2025

The Honorable James B. Frank
Chair, House Select Committee on Disease Prevention & Women's & Children's Health
Texas House of Representatives
PO Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768

RE: ATA ACTION SUPPORT OF HB 997

Dear Chair Frank and Members of the Select Committee on Disease Prevention & Women's & Children's Health:

On behalf of ATA Action, I am writing to express our strong support of House Bill 997 relating to cross-state telehealth provider registration.

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.

As patients and consumers seek out more convenient and affordable ways to access health care, telehealth providers have come to rely on a variety of technological modalities to deliver care. Allowing out-of-state health care providers that maintain good standing in their own state the opportunity to deliver telehealth or telemedicine medical services in Texas will substantially increase available care options for Texas patients. By implementing a registration system, this legislation helps to remove arbitrary geographical barriers and avoids costs associated with more complicated licensure regimes. Moreover, HB 997 maintains appropriate in-state Board control over the registration system to ensure both quality of care and patient safety of Texas residents, safeguards against out-of-state providers with disciplinary actions pending, and allows the in-state Board to take action when disciplinary concerns arise in the provider's state of license. ATA Action believes Boards should be empowered to ensure that practitioners are appropriately upholding the standard of care and can still be held accountable should any issues arise from treatment.

Evidence from Florida's telehealth registration system substantiates the viability and beneficial effects on patient access to care of such registration system. In 2019, Florida legislators enacted a telehealth registration system similar to the proposal in HB 997. In the two years following enactment, over 14,000 providers began offering services in Florida using a telehealth registration and the Florida Department of Health was able to register roughly 90% of all applications.¹ During this same time period, there were only 16 complaints against these telehealth registrants, with zero cases resulting in discipline for services

¹ Josh Achambault, MPP & Ateev Mehrotra, M.D., M.P.H., *Few Disciplinary Issues with Out-of-State Telehealth*, Cicero Inst., page 4 (Jan. 2023), <https://ciceroinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Few-Disciplinary-Issues-with-Out-of-State-Telehealth-Report.pdf>.

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offered to Florida patients.² Other states, seeing this success, have also adopted similar models, including Colorado last year through Senate Bill 141.³

Furthermore, ensuring increased access to telehealth and telemedicine providers can also be a crucial tool in addressing health care professional shortages. As of October 2024, data from the Health Resources & Services Administration found all of but thirty-nine of Texas's counties to be experiencing some form of a health professional shortage area for primary care.⁴ These provider shortages are even more pronounced for mental health professionals, with two-hundred forty-six counties facing whole county shortage areas.⁵ By establishing a registration system for out-of-state telehealth and telemedicine medical service providers as an alternative to full licensure, these shortages will become easier to address, especially in rural areas.

ATA Action believes that this legislation will help create a health care environment in which Texas patients can access much-needed health services as efficiently and effectively as possible, without compromising the high standard of care. HB 997 would serve as an important step forward for telehealth care and patient choice in Texas.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We urge you to pass HB 997 in the interest of expanding Texas patients' access to high-quality, affordable health care. Please do not hesitate to let us know how we can be helpful to your efforts to advance common-sense telehealth policy in Texas. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the telehealth industry's perspective further, please contact me at kzebley@ataaction.org.

Kind regards,

Kyle Zebley
Executive Director
ATA Action

² *Id.* at 7.

³ Colorado Senate Bill 141, 2024 First Regular Session, Sponsored by Senator Kevin Van Winkle, <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb24-141>.

⁴ Health Professional Shortage Areas: Primary Care, by County, 2024 – Texas, Rural Health Information Hub, accessed March 18, 2025, <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/data-explorer?id=210&state=TX>.

⁵ Health Professional Shortage Areas: Mental Health, by County, 2024 – Texas, Rural Health Information Hub, accessed March 3, 2025, <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/data-explorer?id=210&state=TX>.