



430 Organizations Urge Congress to Address 'Telehealth Cliff'

Letter to Congressional Leaders Highlights Telehealth Priorities

WASHINGTON, DC, July 26, 2021 - Today, 430 organizations sent a letter to Congress to urge policymakers to address the “telehealth cliff.” The letter was co-led by the Alliance for Connected Care, American Telemedicine Association, Consumer Technology Association, eHealth Initiative, HIMSS, Health Innovation Alliance, Partnership to Advance Virtual Care, and PCHalliance.

If Congress does not act before the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE), Medicare beneficiaries will lose access to virtual care options which have become a lifeline to many. The letter calls for Congress to advance permanent telehealth reform focused on specific priorities:

- Removing arbitrary restrictions on where a patient must be located in order to utilize telehealth services;
- Ensuring federally qualified health centers, critical access hospitals, and rural health centers can furnish telehealth services;
- Authorizing the Secretary to allow additional telehealth practitioners, services, and modalities; and
- Removing restrictions on telemental health services.

Over the pandemic, telehealth has proven to be an efficient and popular tool to deliver high-quality care. Because of this, many providers and health systems have made substantial investments in telehealth. Congress must act now to pass legislation to ensure patients and providers are not left in the lurch with fewer options to address critical health needs.

Read the letter to Congress, including the list of 400+ stakeholders, [here](#).

[View on website.](#)

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The following quotes are from the organizations co-leading this effort:

Krista Drobac, Executive Director, Alliance for Connected Care

“The pandemic has introduced millions of seniors to telehealth and virtual care services, and has demonstrated a successful new way to access health care efficiently, effectively and as a substitute for in-person care. The time is now for Congress to eliminate outdated and ambiguous statutory barriers so that telehealth remains an option for Medicare beneficiaries moving forward and so that their care is not interrupted abruptly by the end of the public health emergency.”

Kyle Zebly, Vice President of Public Policy, the American Telemedicine Association (ATA)

“One acknowledged bright spot resulting from COVID-19 has been the extraordinary use of telehealth that has allowed patients to access quality care from the convenience of their homes. However, there is now much uncertainty around the future of telehealth, creating chaos and concern for patients and

healthcare providers alike, as the “telehealth cliff” threatens to abruptly cut off access to care, especially for our underserved and rural populations,” said Kyle Zebley, Vice President of Public Policy at the ATA. “With 430 stakeholders in lockstep, and unprecedented bipartisan support for these legislative priorities, we urge Congress to act swiftly to ensure that telehealth remains permanently available following expiration of the public health emergency. The ATA remains committed to working collaboratively to ensure Medicare beneficiaries can continue to access care when and where they need it.”

Jennifer Covich Bordenick, CEO, eHealth Initiative

“It is far past time to update our telehealth laws. These are arbitrary restrictions that should be removed,” said Jen Covich Bordenick, Chief Executive Officer of eHealth Initiative. “The pandemic highlighted just how outdated our current law is. Congress needs to take immediate action to ensure millions of patients do not lose access to care delivered via telehealth.”

Brett Meeks, Vice President, Health Innovation Alliance

“Being able to call or video chat your doctor instead of driving into an office makes good, practical sense in many instances. But for millions of American seniors and the disabled, using a smart phone to get care will no longer be an option unless Congress acts to change the outdated Medicare statute before the end of the pandemic. Health Innovation Alliance urges Congress to stop waiting and permanently allow beneficiaries to receive care remotely and in their homes.”

Rob Havasy, Managing Director, Personal Connected Health Alliance

“Evidence-based connected care has been at the core of our nation’s health resiliency throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and has established its important role in improving healthcare quality, access, and value for all Americans. HIMSS and PCHAlliance urge Congress to swiftly act to make the Medicare coverage changes permanent, to give patients and providers access to the tools they need and deserve.”

Mara McDermott, Executive Director, Partnership to Advance Virtual Care

“The pandemic advanced telehealth policy by more than a decade overnight. Absent Congressional action, all of that substantial progress could be lost as quickly as it was gained. The Partnership to Advance Virtual Care urges Congress to provide certainty and stability for providers and patients who have gained access, convenience, and reliability from a wide array of virtual care services.”

Alliance for Connected Care

1100 H St NW, Washington, D.C.
United States

202-849-3203
crystal.wallace@connectwithcare.org



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