

September 14, 2022

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo,

On behalf of the Mental Health Liaison Group consisting of several national organizations representing consumers, family members, mental health and addiction providers, advocates and other stakeholders committed to retaining telehealth flexibilities for Americans, we urge the committee to advance the bipartisan *Advancing Telehealth Beyond COVID-19 Act of 2021* ([H.R. 4040](#)) that passed overwhelmingly in the U.S. House of Representatives in July.

As individuals and families across the nation face unprecedented behavioral health needs, timely and safe access to mental health and substance use disorder services are critical. This legislation will extend several telehealth flexibilities through 2024, specifically the removal of geographic and originating site requirements, expands the list of telehealth-eligible providers, delays the in-person visit requirement for mental health service delivery, and continues audio-only services as a covered telehealth modality at the conclusion of the 151-day extension that passed within the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022*. This legislation will provide continuity of care and stability for individuals and families and enable the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services additional time to continue their evaluation of telehealth services and for the U.S. Congress to work toward solutions to address telehealth permanency.

Telehealth use among Medicare beneficiaries has risen astronomically since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic as visits conducted through telehealth increased 63-fold in 2020 alone.¹ Telehealth has also served as a bridge for patients to continue accessing behavioral health care or potentially has increased the comfort level to seek this type of care from their own home a third of Medicare visits via telehealth were with behavioral health specialists, compared to 8% with primary care providers and 3% with other specialists.²

Thank you for your continued commitment to ensuring Americans can receive behavioral health care services. We look forward to working with you to advance this legislation before the end of year.

Sincerely,

2020 Mom

ACTNow for Mental Health

American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare

¹ Samson W, Tarazi W, Turrini G, Sheingold, S. (December 3, 2021). Medicare Beneficiaries' Use of Telehealth in 2020: Trends by Beneficiary Characteristics and Location. ASPE. Retrieved from <https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/medicare-beneficiaries-use-telehealth-2020>

² *Ibid.*

American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology
American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists (AAPP)
American Association on Health and Disability
American Counseling Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Psychological Association
American Telemedicine Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare, Inc. (AABH)
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Children's Hospital Association
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
International OCD Foundation
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
Mental Health America
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Social Workers

National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors

National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC)

National Council for Mental Wellbeing

National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)

National Eating Disorders Association

National League for Nursing

National Network of Depression Centers

Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies

Postpartum Support International

REDC Consortium

RI International

The College for Behavioral Health Leadership

The Jewish Federations of North America

The Kennedy Forum

Trust for America's Health