

DELIVERING ON THE PROMISE OF VIRTUAL CARE

The Alliance of Community Health Plans (ACHP) supports expanded access to and adoption of telehealth, including important care delivery flexibilities that empower consumers and doctors to use virtual care broadly.

ACHP supports bipartisan efforts to ensure the full promise of telehealth to promote health equity, improve patient access and drive value in the health care system.

Improving and Expanding Access to Care

It is imperative that Congress protect recent gains in telehealth and ensure continued access to the coverage and care Americans need. Virtual care has been vital in reaching underserved, rural and at-risk populations, especially during the pandemic; maintaining chronic care management; delivering mental health services; and keeping consumers out of in-patient settings that may pose a risk of contracting COVID-19.

Current law prevents telehealth from reaching its full potential to expand patient access and improve health outcomes for diverse and underrepresented communities. Rural, frontier, minority, economically depressed and other high-risk populations are the least likely to have access to high-speed internet. In addition, 15 percent of Americans own a cellphone, but not a smartphone. That percentage increases to 24 percent in rural areas. We must make every effort to ensure that telehealth closes existing disparities in health care rather than entrenching them.



Securing the Future of Virtual Care

ACHP urges Congress to:

- **Pass bipartisan legislation to extend current telehealth flexibilities through December 31 2024.** The Advancing Telehealth Beyond COVID-19 Act (H.R. 4040) passed the House on July 27, 2022. This bill would implement MedPAC's recommendation to continue the existing flexibilities for two years beyond the public health emergency. Doing so will allow Congress and CMS the time needed to make final policy decisions on permanent telehealth flexibilities AND give health plans and providers the assurances they need to continue providing telehealth while preventing a "telehealth cliff."
- **Support Hospital at Home Models.** The *Acute Hospital Care at Home Program* waivers expire at the end of the public health emergency. Support the bipartisan *Hospital Inpatient Services Modernization Act* (S. 3792/H.R. 7053), which extends the program out past the public health emergency.
- **Improve access to virtual mental and behavioral health services.** Congress should pass the bipartisan *Telemental Health Care Access Act* (S 2061, HR 4058), which removes the in-person requirement in Medicare.

The Alliance of Community Health Plans (ACHP) represents the nation's top-performing non-profit health plans to improve affordability and outcomes in the health care system. ACHP member companies provide high-quality coverage and care to nearly 22 million Americans across 35 states and D.C.



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