

April 27, 2023

The Honorable Brenda Carter
Chair
House Insurance and Financial Services Committee
Michigan House of Representatives
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Re: **AMA Support of House Bill 4131**

Dear Chair Carter:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I am writing to express our **strong support of House Bill 4131 (HB 4131)**, which includes key policies that support patient access to high-quality telemedicine. As the telemedicine landscape has evolved over the last few years, policymakers have had a unique opportunity to study the impact of the changing telemedicine landscape and provide clear guidance on policy measures that support the best course forward for high-quality care, including access to care in rural and underserved communities. The AMA believes that many of the provisions in HB 4131, including coverage parity, fair and equitable payment, and network adequacy, meet these needs and should be made permanent. As such, we strongly encourage the House Insurance and Financial Services Committee (Committee) to vote “yes” on HB 4131.

HB 4131 supports continuity of care and the patient-physician relationship

First, the AMA strongly supports the coverage parity language in HB 4131, which ensures that patients will continue to have access to telemedicine, including from their regular physician. The vast majority of physicians who provide telemedicine continue to provide in-person care and have made significant investments to fully integrate telemedicine into their practices – as an option for patients when clinically appropriate. These “hybrid physicians” offer patients the best of both worlds by allowing the physician to deliver the right care, via the most accessible and appropriate modality, at the right time. Ensuring coverage of services provided to patients – whether it is via in-person or telemedicine – is critical to support continuity of care, the patient-physician relationship, and patient choice.

The AMA also supports fair and equitable payment policies for telemedicine, such as those found in HB 4131, recognizing that such laws support physician investment and integration of telemedicine in their practice. When providing telemedicine, physicians often use the same clinical and non-clinical staff who deliver in-person services and may even incur additional costs associated with telemedicine care delivery (e.g., technology support staff, telemedicine platforms, and additional data privacy and security measures). Laws that support fair and equitable payment for telemedicine ensure physicians can continue providing this valuable service to their patients. The AMA believes that physician payments should be equitable whether the service is performed via audio-only, two-way audio-video, or in-person.

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The AMA also supports language in HB 4131 that specifies that care provided via telemedicine must meet the appropriate standard of care. Physicians must ensure that the technology used to provide care to patients is appropriate for the clinical evaluation and treatment sought by the patient, while also recognizing that the appropriate modality may vary based on the individual needs of the unique patient and physician. If the appropriate standard of care cannot be met via telemedicine, then care should be provided in-person. This is imperative to ensure high-quality care and patient safety.

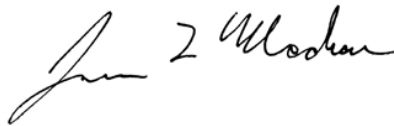
HB 4131 supports network adequacy

Finally, the AMA strongly supports the network adequacy language in HB 4131. Patients should always have access to care in-person if they choose. Moreover, it is often impossible for a physician to know whether a telemedicine visit may necessitate in-person care. As such, telemedicine-only providers should not be used to meet network adequacy requirements. This is particularly important to support continued access to care in areas where physician shortages already exist.

For all these reasons, the AMA strongly encourages you to support HB 4131 and for your Committee to vote “yes.” HB 4131 is a vital bill that protects patient access to high-quality telemedicine.

If you have any questions, please contact Kim Horvath, JD, Senior Attorney, AMA Advocacy Resource Center, at kimberly.horvath@ama-assn.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara".

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Michigan State Medical Society
Bobby Mukkamala, MD