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October 31, 2019

The Honorable Brian Schatz
United States Senate
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schatz:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I applaud your leadership and efforts to make telehealth services available to Medicare beneficiaries and providers. The legislation that you have sponsored, S.2741, the “Creating Opportunities Now for Necessary and Effective Care Technologies (CONNECT) for Health Act of 2019,” would benefit patients by removing antiquated restrictions in the Medicare program that prevent physicians from using widely available medical technology that has become commonplace in the past decade. The AMA strongly supports this legislation.

While other federal health programs, state Medicaid programs, and private health plans have allowed adoption of telehealth, the current Medicare restrictions have impeded the uptake of now well-established service delivery methods. Increased access to telehealth is urgently needed to help meet the health needs of the swiftly changing demographics of our senior population. Telehealth is also critical for providers to achieve the goals of Medicare payment and delivery reform efforts to improve outcomes and reduce costs. It is long overdue that these artificial barriers be removed, and that the Medicare program, beneficiaries, and providers be allowed to take full advantage of innovative new telehealth services.

The medical profession has been embracing advances in digital health services that help them diagnose and treat their patients earlier and in less costly care settings, improve workflow, and help patients improve compliance and adherence with their care plans. The CONNECT for Health Act’s expansion of telehealth coverage in the Medicare program would spur increased investment and innovation in delivery redesign to benefit all patients.

Thank you for your continued leadership on this issue. We look forward to working with you to advance this legislation in Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James L. Madara, MD