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September 2, 2020

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander:

On behalf of our physician and medical student members, the American Medical Association (AMA) is writing to **express our support for S. 4375, the “Telehealth Modernization Act of 2020.”**¹ It is critically important that Medicare beneficiaries continue to be able to access telehealth services from their physicians without arbitrary restrictions throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency and beyond. S. 4375 would provide this coverage by eliminating the 1834(m) statutory restrictions on originating site and geographic location, thereby ensuring Medicare coverage of telehealth services regardless of where the patient is located.

While telemedicine is one of many tools in a physician’s arsenal to treat patients, telehealth services have emerged as a critical component of our COVID-19 prevention and mitigation strategy. During the pandemic, telemedicine has allowed physicians to provide care to patients while supporting physical distancing efforts and reducing the spread of *SARS-CoV-2* and other infectious diseases by avoiding unnecessary outpatient visits. Telehealth technologies allow physicians to increase continuity of care, extend access beyond normal clinic hours, and help overcome clinician shortages, especially in rural and other underserved populations. This ultimately helps health systems and physician practices focus more on chronic disease management, enhance patient wellness, improve efficiency, provide higher quality of care, and increase patient satisfaction. Many physicians are touting the expansion of telehealth during the COVID-19 public health emergency as a positive step for health care delivery due to increased provider/patient communication, greater provider/patient trust, and access to real-time information related to a patient’s social determinants of health (i.e., a patient’s physical living environment, economic stability, or food insecurity), which can lead to better health outcomes and reduced care costs.

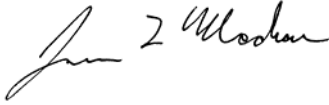
The success of telehealth technology adoption during the COVID-19 public health emergency has made it abundantly clear that this technology should be available to all Medicare patients regardless of where they live or how they access telehealth services.

¹ <https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/s4375/BILLS-116s4375is.pdf>.

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The AMA appreciates your leadership on this important issue and looks forward to working with you to see this legislation enacted.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD