

September 9, 2021

The Honorable Phil Murphy  
Governor  
Office of the Governor  
State of New Jersey  
P.O. Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Murphy:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I am writing to express our **strong support of Senate Bill 2559/Assembly Bill 4179 (S. 2559/A. 4179)**, which will expand coverage and payment of telehealth and ensure patients in New Jersey continue to have access to high-quality telehealth from their existing physician. Telehealth has been instrumental throughout the COVID-19 pandemic as a key tool allowing physicians to continue providing care and patients to continue accessing care safely from their trusted physician. We believe that telehealth will continue to be an integral part of health care moving forward. We also see lawmakers playing a critical role in determining telehealth's future by making permanent policies that support these advancements. We strongly encourage you to sign S. 2559/A. 4179 into law because these bills include key provisions that will ensure: (1) patients continue to have access to high-quality telehealth; and (2) physicians are able to continue providing care to their patients using telehealth, resulting in improved outcomes, increased patient and physician satisfaction, and lower overall health care costs.

**S. 2559/A. 4179-Support Patient Access to Care via Telehealth**

As states expanded coverage and payment of telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic, more physicians implemented telehealth in their practices and more patients were able to seek care via telehealth from their regular, in-person physician. Patients and physicians alike have seen the value of telehealth. Telehealth has not only increased the quality of and access to care, but it has also supported the continuity of care between a patient and their physician. When clinically appropriate, telehealth can be an important tool for physicians to provide care to patients by supporting follow-up care, improving medication adherence, and reducing patient visits to the emergency department or urgent care. Telehealth also improves patient satisfaction by decreasing wait times, reducing travel time to the physician, and reducing or eliminating time off work and/or the need to seek alternative childcare. As telehealth rapidly evolves, the AMA believes it should no longer be viewed as a separate and distinct service, but rather one way in which physicians can provide care to their patients. In order, to support the full integration of telehealth into physician practices and improve access to care, the AMA strongly supports language in S. 2559/A. 4179 that eliminates geographic and originating site restrictions for telehealth coverage and prohibits payer practices that impose more stringent utilization management requirements for services provided via telemedicine.

S. 2559/A. 4179-Support the Sustainability of Physician Practices, Patient Access, and Utilization of High-quality Telehealth

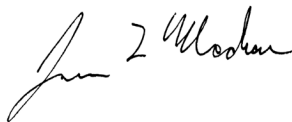
Physician practices continue to make significant investments to ensure they can continue providing telehealth to their patients. These practices should have certainty going forward that such investments are sustainable and are being deployed optimally for high-quality patient care. Yet, as temporary measures supporting coverage and payment of telehealth expire, physicians and other health care professionals are deeply worried about whether they will be able to sustain telehealth in their practices – despite their desire to do so. In a recent [survey](#), 73 percent of health care professional respondents cited low or no reimbursement as the biggest barrier or challenge to maintaining telehealth after the COVID-19 pandemic. Provisions supporting fair payment policies for telehealth, as found in S. 2559/A. 4179, are critically important to maintaining patient access to high-quality telehealth.

S. 2559/A. 4179-Support Continuity of Care, Patient Satisfaction, Improved Outcomes, and Lower Overall Health Care Costs

Additionally, S. 2559/A. 4179 support continuity of care by ensuring all in-network physicians who provide care to their patients in-person can also provide care via telehealth. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic payers often limited patient access to telehealth by requiring or incentivizing patients to access care from select third-party telehealth organizations that they owned or with whom they contracted. As more physicians integrate telehealth in their practices, this parallel track no longer makes sense. It is often confusing to patients who seek telehealth from their actual in-person physician. As such, we strongly support the language in S. 2559/A. 4179 prohibiting payers from limiting coverage only to services delivered by select third-party telemedicine or telehealth organizations, as well as the language prohibiting carriers from using telehealth or telemedicine to meet network adequacy requirements. Taken together these provisions support patients' continued access to their regular in-network, in-person physician. This, in turn, strengthens the patient-physician relationship and promotes continuity of care, resulting in improved patient satisfaction, improved patient outcomes, and lower overall health care costs.

For all of the reasons stated above, we strongly encourage you to sign S. 2559/A. 4179 into law. If you have any questions, please contact Kim Horvath, JD, Senior Legislative Attorney, AMA Advocacy Resource Center, at [kimberly.horvath@ama-assn.org](mailto:kimberly.horvath@ama-assn.org) or (630) 251-7118.

Sincerely,



James L. Madara, MD

cc: Medical Society of New Jersey