



Physicians Caring for Texans

April 29, 2021

The Honorable John Cornyn
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz
127A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Urge cosponsor and support of the Telehealth Modernization Act (S. 368)

Dear Senators Cornyn and Cruz:

On behalf of our more than 55,000 Texas physician and medical student members, the Texas Medical Association (TMA) writes requesting you cosponsor and support the Telehealth Modernization Act (S. 368).

This bill would permanently remove Medicare's "geographic and originating site" restrictions, which require that the patient must live in a designated rural area and use telehealth services at a doctor's office or certain other clinical sites. This bill also seeks to protect access to telehealth for patients in rural and medically underserved areas. Given the increased use of telemedicine due to the public health emergency caused by COVID-19, TMA contends the policies in this bill are ready to be made permanent, and we ask for your support in its passage.

Under current law, Medicare is prohibited from covering and paying for telehealth services delivered via two-way audio-visual technology unless it is provided at an eligible site in a rural area. This forces patients to needlessly travel to an eligible originating site to receive telehealth services, with a few exceptions. Current law essentially bars Medicare beneficiaries from using widely available two-way audio-visual technologies to access covered telehealth services unless they live in a rural area.

As widely declared, the one silver lining of the COVID-19 pandemic is the widespread adoption of telemedicine by physicians and patients. TMA supports telecommunications systems that provide physicians with resources that enhance health care delivery.

Thank you for considering our request to cosponsor S. 368. This important legislation is bipartisan and bicameral and should be signed into law. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Dan Finch, TMA vice president of advocacy, at dan.finch@texmed.org.

Sincerely,

Diana L. Fite, MD
President
Texas Medical Association