

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

January 28, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

Telehealth has been a critical tool during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that patients continue to receive the health care they need while keeping health care providers and patients safe. Congress recognized the importance of telehealth and included provisions in COVID-19 legislation to increase access to telehealth services for Medicare beneficiaries during the pandemic. We strongly support permanently expanding Medicare coverage of telehealth and removing other barriers to the use of telehealth because of its ability to expand access to care, reduce costs, and improve health outcomes. While Congress prepares to enact permanent telehealth legislation, we urge you to include an extension of the pandemic telehealth authorities in must-pass government funding legislation in February.

An extension to maintain expanded coverage of Medicare telehealth services for a set period of time would provide much-needed certainty to health care providers and patients. Ramping up telehealth requires significant costs and resources from health care providers. However, the pandemic telehealth authorities are temporary and tied to the COVID-19 public health emergency declaration, which is renewed in three-month increments. Without more definitive knowledge about the duration of the pandemic and Medicare's long-term coverage of telehealth, many organizations have been hesitant to fully invest in telehealth. An extension of the telehealth authorities would provide assurance that the investments will be sustainable over the long term. It would also reassure patients that their care will not end abruptly.

In addition, since the use of telehealth in Medicare was very low before the pandemic, an extension would provide additional time to collect and analyze data on the impacts of telehealth. This data could help inform Congress's next steps on permanent telehealth legislation and appropriate program integrity and beneficiary protections. In the meantime, it is crucial that an extension not include unnecessary statutory barriers in accessing telehealth services during this data collection and analysis period.

Telehealth has become an essential part of the health care system. The permanent telehealth reforms included in the *CONNECT for Health Act*, which has bipartisan support from over 170 members of Congress, as well as other telehealth bills, are imperative to increase access to care, reduce costs, and improve health outcomes. In February, Congress should extend the authorities that have expanded coverage of telehealth services during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to maintain access to telehealth and provide necessary certainty for Medicare telehealth coverage.

We appreciate your collaboration on this important issue.

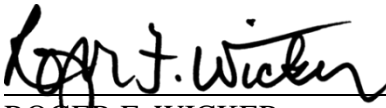
Sincerely,



BRIAN SCHATZ
United States Senator



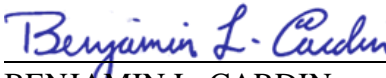
MIKE THOMPSON
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ROGER F. WICKER
United States Senator



DAVID SCHWEIKERT
Member of Congress



BENJAMIN L. CARDIN
United States Senator



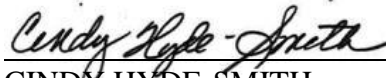
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United States Senator



PETER WELCH
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MARCO RUBIO
United States Senator



KYRSTEN SINEMA
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KEVIN CRAMER
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DIANNE FEINSTEIN
United States Senator



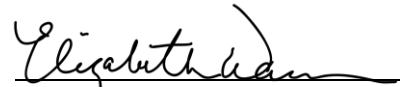
JERRY MORAN
United States Senator



JON TESTER
United States Senator



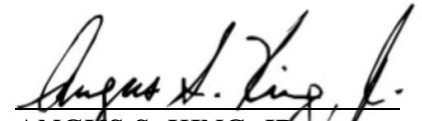
THOM TILLIS
United States Senator



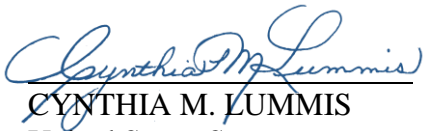
ELIZABETH WARREN
United States Senator



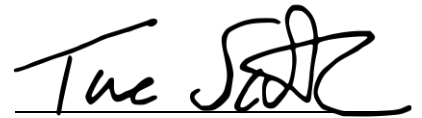
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TAMMY DUCKWORTH
United States Senator



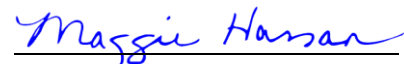
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United States Senator

/s/ Martin Heinrich
MARTIN HEINRICH
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BERNARD SANDERS
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DON BACON
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Michael Guest
MICHAEL GUEST
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