

December 14, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Support for provisions to allow telemedicine prescribing of controlled substances

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

As you negotiate the final terms of year-end spending and COVID relief packages, we urge you to include an important bipartisan provision to continue to allow telemedicine prescribing of controlled substances through at least the end of calendar year 2021. We represent provider, patient, and public health organizations advocating to ensure access to needed medications for behavioral health conditions. Telehealth is a critical tool to increase access to behavioral health services, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing addiction epidemic. Congress and federal agencies have taken important actions this year to provide policy flexibilities to ensure patients have access to appropriate telebehavioral health services during the public health emergency. It is critical that these flexibilities remain in place for a stable period of time while more permanent policies are determined.

We would be pleased to work with you to enact more permanent policies to ensure access to behavioral health services via telehealth to address the opioid epidemic and other behavioral health conditions. In the meantime, we urge immediate support of a specific temporary policy that is currently under consideration and has already received the endorsement of a bipartisan group of lawmakers.

We urge Congress to extend the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) waiver of the prior in-person requirement before telemedicine is allowed for prescribing of controlled substances under the Ryan Haight Act through the end of 2021. The DEA has waived this requirement for the duration of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE).¹ To provide stability and time for work on a more permanent policy, the waiver should be extended at least until the end of 2021. This provision is included in the \$908 billion Bipartisan Emergency COVID Relief Act of 2020.

¹ <https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/coronavirus.html>

Thank you for your leadership addressing the simultaneous public health crises of the COVID-19 pandemic and the addiction epidemic.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Aging Research
Alliance for Connected Care
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American Psychiatric Association
American Telemedicine Association
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Bluebonnet Trails Community Services
Brave Health
Centerstone
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists
InnovaTel Telepsychiatry
InSight + Regroup
The Kennedy Forum
Magellan Health
National Council for Behavioral Health
Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services
Recovery Centers of America
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America
Teladoc Health
Telebehavioral Health Institute