



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 21, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol, H-232
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
The Capitol, S-230
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader McConnell:

It is no surprise that during these tumultuous times, mental health and addiction have increasingly become a concern. Between behavioral health facilities and providers limiting in-person treatments, patients not wishing to leave home, and the social, economic and health stresses of the pandemic weighing on many, ensuring access to mental health and addiction care is of the utmost importance. We are therefore writing to urge Congress to expand behavioral telehealth services in any upcoming COVID-19 response packages for a reasonable transition period following the COVID-19 emergency period to collect appropriate data to provide an adequate amount of time to determine which of those flexibilities should be continued permanently.

Telehealth is proving to be an extremely successful approach in ensuring that patients are receiving mental health and addiction care during this trying and unprecedented time, and we applaud the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for expanding behavioral telehealth flexibilities, and ultimately increasing access to these essential services. In particular, we are grateful that CMS is providing broader coverage of behavioral telehealth services, which has helped expand access to many individuals in rural and medically underserved areas, and allowed individuals to receive these services in their home.

Furthermore, CMS announced that audio-only telephone communications would be considered a reimbursed telehealth service for behavioral health care. We have heard from constituents and providers how important this flexibility is for individuals living in areas with poor internet connectivity, or those who do not have access to video telecommunication devices for care.

Without regular access to behavioral health services, we are concerned that thousands of individuals will be seeking emergency care, with many turning to substance misuse or suicide risks. Telehealth is proving to be a successful means in bridging this gap of care, and it is critical that once the COVID-19 pandemic subsides, access to behavioral health services does not.

Sincerely,

Tom Emmer
Member of Congress

Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress



Ted Budd
Member of Congress



Bradley Byrne
Member of Congress



Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



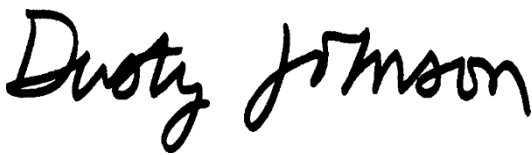
Jim Hagedorn
Member of Congress



Andy Harris, M.D.
Member of Congress



Vicky Hartzler
Member of Congress



Dusty Johnson
Member of Congress



John Katko
Member of Congress



Steve King
Member of Congress



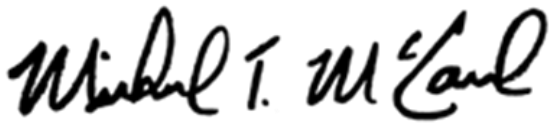
Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



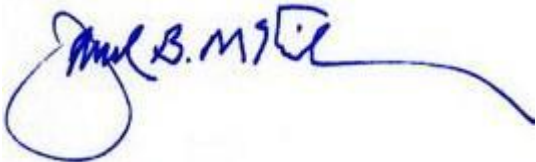
Roger Marshall, M.D.
Member of Congress



Michael T. McCaul
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



David B. McKinley, P.E.
Member of Congress



Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress



Lisa Blunt Rochester
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Tim Ryan
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



David Schweikert
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Jason Smith
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Pete Stauber
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Bryan Steil
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Chris Stewart
Member of Congress



Steve Stivers
Member of Congress



David Trone
Member of Congress



Susan Wild
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress