

The Honorable Charles J. Schumer
Hart Senate Office Building, 322
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Cannon House Office Building, 326
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Russell Senate Office Building, 317
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Longworth House Office Building, 1607
Washington, DC 20515

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

The end of the Public Health Emergency (PHE) today is a stark reminder of the hardships of COVID-19 and all that we have overcome. It is also a reminder of the progress we have made and the need to permanently safeguard access to one of the positive outcomes of the pandemic— the expansion of telehealth.

As you know, Congress, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) lifted telehealth restrictions through telehealth waivers in response to the pandemic. [According to HHS](#), this resulted in a 63-fold increase in telehealth utilization among Medicare fee-for-service (FFS) beneficiaries 2019 to 2020, totaling nearly 53 million telehealth visits in 2020 compared to less than one million in 2019. Patients and providers continue to rely on telehealth and its benefits.

To name just a few of these many benefits, [studies show](#) that telehealth increases access to care without increasing costs to taxpayers, and average virtual care patients see a 61 percent decrease in their health care expenses compared to in-person care. [Clinicians and specialists also say](#) telehealth helps improve access to underserved communities, communities of color, seniors and hard to access parts of rural America. Further, [recent research](#) analyzing oncology patient data found that virtual care saves patients \$200 each visit and diminishes driving distance and time, lost income, and time spent in the clinic. Virtual care is [also supporting](#) access to quality care and helping address critical challenges for skilled nursing facilities and [helping young diabetes patients](#) access the care they need while lowering distress.

Patients agree. A [recent report](#) found that seven-in-ten consumers say telehealth is better or comparable to in-person visits. According to MS and lupus patients like [New Jersey resident Letita](#), “getting around can sometimes be difficult. But because of telehealth, I’m still able to access the care I need from my home.” Stroke recovery patient [George Hoffman](#) shares a similar sentiment, “[telehealth] has been a game changer for me and my wife ... Telehealth has saved me time, money and endless frustration trying to coordinate rides to and from routine appointments.” And a 45-year-old woman in Illinois notes that, “Telehealth has been fundamental for my eating disorder recovery.”

Recognizing the value of virtual care and need to protect it, the U.S. House passed legislation in July 2022 that would have extended telehealth protections for two years with 416 votes in favor of the legislation. Congress later came together and extended telehealth flexibilities until the end of 2024 in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 with bipartisan support.

This temporary extension was welcomed news for patients and providers alike, but remains just that – a temporary solution. According to a [recent study](#), nearly three-in-four virtual care users want Congress to make current telehealth flexibilities permanent.

The patients and organizations we represent need certainty that only Congress can provide. It is in the best interest of patients and providers nationwide that Congress make telehealth a permanent piece of the health care puzzle.

Sincerely,

Telehealth Access for America