



March 6, 2023

Dear Members of the House Commerce Finance and Policy Committee,

On behalf of the more than 10,000 members of the Minnesota Medical Association (MMA), I am writing in strong support of HF 1706 regarding access to telehealth medical services.

Telehealth is a valuable tool that has revolutionized healthcare in recent years. Continued coverage of telehealth services is essential to ensure that Minnesotans have access to high quality healthcare.

Telehealth is not a replacement for in-person care, but for many services it has been shown to be an effective tool that increases access to care. For those services where telehealth is effective, the ability to provide audio-only coverage is critical. This is particularly important for patients who do not have access to reliable internet or broadband connectivity, low-income patients who may not have access to video-only technology, or patients who are less comfortable using video-only services. Additionally, audio-only coverage must be available for patients who may have visual impairments.

According to the Minnesota Department of Human Services, telehealth has been shown to increase access to care for adolescents, older patients, veterans, and individuals located in rural locations, and those who have transportation barriers and mobility issues. A recent Minnesota Department of Health and Human Services study showed that ethnic minority groups and rural tribal groups prefer telehealth that is provided by telephone and not via the internet.

Telehealth services, specifically audio-only, provide patients with access to medical treatment regardless of circumstances that would otherwise serve as an obstacle to care. Again, let me stress that in no way is telehealth a replacement for in-person care. However, in certain circumstances, telehealth is an appropriate tool for patients.

On behalf of the MMA, I ask you to support HF 1706.

Sincerely,

William Nicholson, MD  
President, Minnesota Medical Association