

September 26, 2017

The Honorable Joni Ernst
111 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mazie Hirono
730 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Glenn Thompson
124 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Julia Brownley
1019 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Hirono, Ernst, Representatives Thompson and Brownley:

The undersigned organizations are writing to express our support for the Veterans E-Health & Telemedicine Support (VETS) Act of 2017. We applaud your continued commitment to advancing telehealth to allow for better access to lower cost, quality care.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has been a leader in telehealth. Through the use of technology, veterans can access the right care at the right time. Given the complex care needs of veterans and the growing strain on the resources of the Veterans Health Administration, telehealth has proven beneficial in alleviating stress on the VA system. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, approximately 12 percent of veterans received elements of their care via telehealth – and 45 percent of these veterans were located in rural areas. Veterans enrolled in home telehealth for non-institutional care needs and chronic care management had a 59 percent decrease in VA bed days of care and a 31 percent decrease in VA hospital admissions. Additionally, veteran satisfaction with telehealth is very high – 88 percent for home telehealth.

Despite these advances and outcomes, artificial geographical restrictions on the use of telehealth constrain its use within the VA. Under current law, the VA can only waive state provider licensing requirements if both the physician and patient are located in a federally owned facility. Because a significant number of veterans live in rural areas, this requirement places a burden on veterans, who often must travel to federal facilities to receive care from a VA provider located in another state.

We applaud your efforts to remove these restrictions by allowing VA providers to treat veterans in their home, regardless of location. In a world of technology utilization, health care should not be restricted by state borders.

It is unacceptable that our veterans must overcome artificial barriers when attempting to access healthcare, and we commend you for your work to remove these restrictions. In order to advance access to better quality and coordinated care via telehealth, we strongly support the VETS Act of 2017. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to advance this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

American Art Therapy Association
American Association of Diabetes Educators
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Psychological Association
Apervita, Inc.
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Brain Injury Association of America
Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy and Practice
College of Healthcare Information Management Executives
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Environmental Monitoring Technologies
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Health IT Now
LifeWire Corp.
Lung Cancer Alliance
NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
New Directions Technology Consulting, LLC
Oracle
Teladoc, Inc.
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research
United Spinal Association - VetsFirst Program
University of Pittsburgh Center for Military Medicine Research