



**CALIFORNIA
HOSPITAL
ASSOCIATION**

*Providing Leadership in
Health Policy and Advocacy*

July 31, 2020

The Honorable Mike Thompson
U.S. House of Representatives
Via email

Subject: Telehealth Act of 2020

Dear Representative Thompson:

California's hospitals are committed to improved access to care and increased real-time communication between practitioners and patients. For those reasons and on behalf of our more than 400 member hospitals and health systems, the California Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates and strongly supports your important efforts to expand telehealth services.

The *Protecting Access to Post-COVID-19 Telehealth Act of 2020* (H.R. 7663) would remove long-standing barriers to telehealth services and improve access to care for Californians and patients across the country. Importantly, the bill would allow critical flexibility during public health emergencies and help protect our health care heroes delivering care to their communities every day.

While CHA believes that telehealth services are extremely important to addressing the unique challenges of rural communities, we also support access to telehealth for patients who reside in suburban and urban areas of the state. We appreciate that your legislation would eliminate current geographic restrictions and allow telehealth services to be provided in a patient's home, as well as allow rural health clinics and federally qualified health centers to serve as direct providers.

The telehealth flexibilities allowed during the COVID-19 public health emergency have been vital to hospitals' ability to surge to meet the inpatient care needs of their communities. By increasing access to care outside the traditional hospital walls, preserving scarce resources, and addressing workforce shortages, this delivery model has benefited both patients and hospitals.

We are pleased that H.R. 7663 would also expand the authority of the Secretary of Health and Human Services to waive or modify Medicare telehealth requirements during an emergency period, under Section 1135 of the Social Security Act, when telehealth could also support access to and continuity of care for patients displaced by fire, flood, earthquakes, or other natural disasters. CHA strongly supports expanded authority for the Secretary to extend telehealth waivers during public health emergencies.

CHA supports H.R. 7663 and looks forward to working with you to ensure its passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne O'Rourke".

Anne O'Rourke
Senior Vice President, Federal Relations

Cc: Representative Doris Matsui