



January 24, 2020

The Honorable Fred Martin, Chair
Senate Health & Welfare Committee
Idaho Legislature
700 W Jefferson Street, Room WW54
Boise, ID 83702

The Honorable Fred Wood, Chair
House Health & Welfare Committee
Idaho Legislature
700 W Jefferson Street, Room EW02
Boise, ID 83702

Re: HB 342 - Telehealth Legislation to Expand Access to Care in Idaho

Dear Chairmen Martin and Wood:

On behalf of the American Telemedicine Association (ATA), I am writing to encourage you and your colleagues to vote favorably on Representative Blanksma's proposed legislation, HB 342, to amend the Idaho Telehealth Access Act to better support innovation, advance the adoption of digital health technologies, address health care provider shortages, and help expand access to quality care in Idaho.

As the only organization completely focused on advancing telehealth, the ATA is committed to ensuring that everyone has access to safe, affordable and appropriate care when and where they need it, enabling the system to do more good for more people. The ATA represents a broad and inclusive member network of technology solution providers and payers, as well as partner organizations and alliances, working to advance industry adoption of telehealth, promote responsible policy, advocate for government and market normalization, and provide education and resources to help integrate virtual care into emerging value-based delivery models.

As you may know, Idaho is the only state in the nation that requires an audio and visual connection to establish a provider-patient relationship. This requirement unfortunately prevents patients and providers in Idaho from accessing and utilizing emerging digital health technologies to expand access to care. Given advances in telehealth technologies and delivery, we believe that the audio-visual only requirement under current law is an unnecessary and clinically unsubstantiated barrier to quality care that leverages video, interactive audio, high definition photos (i.e. for dermatology), and remote patient



monitoring programs, all of which would go far in addressing some of the significant provider shortages and health care disparities in the state.

Health Care Provider Shortages Impacting Idaho

- Idaho has the lowest primary care physician supply ratio in the US.¹
- 42 of 44 Idaho counties face primary care health provider shortages, according to data from the US Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).²
- Idaho has only 192.6 active physicians per 100,000 population, according to data from the Association of American Medical Colleges.³

The ATA supports legislation that is technology and modality neutral. We believe that policies that allow providers and patients to access care when and where they need it – using safe and effective technologies – can help improve patient outcomes at reduced costs. Additionally, efforts to expand access to virtual care would allow Idaho to better align with neighboring states who have made similar reforms in recent years. For these reasons, we support HB 342 and recommend further consideration of this critical legislation.

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues impacting your state and constituents. If you have any questions or would like to further discuss ATA's perspective, please contact me at kharper@americantelemed.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Harper", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kevin Harper
Director, Public Policy

¹ <https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/PCP/state/ID>

² <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/shortage-area/hpsa-find>

³ <https://www.aamc.org/system/files/2019-12/state-physician-Idaho-2019%5B1%5D.pdf>