



Association for Behavioral  
Health and Wellness

*Advancing benefits and services  
in mental health, substance use  
and behavior change.*

February 2, 2016

The Honorable Brian Schatz  
United States Senate  
722 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker  
United States Senate  
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Schatz and Wicker:

The Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW) expresses our support for the CONNECT for Health Act. We thank you for your bipartisan leadership on the important issue of telehealth.

ABHW is the national voice for companies that manage behavioral health and wellness benefits. ABHW member companies provide specialty services to treat mental health, substance use, and other behaviors that impact health to approximately 150 million people in both the public and private sectors. ABHW and its member companies use their behavioral health expertise to improve health care outcomes for individuals and families across the health care spectrum.

Expanding access to telehealth services is a top priority for ABHW member companies. Telehealth services have been proven to drive important advancements for our patients, expand access to care, improve health outcomes, reduce the inappropriate use of psychotropic medications, overcome the stigma barrier, and cut costs. Given that approximately 25% of the adult population in the United States is reported to have a mental illness, and the fact that there is a growing shortage of behavioral health providers to respond to this significant need for service, the expansion of telehealth is critical.

As you know, Medicare pays for telehealth services when the service is furnished by an eligible practitioner; a patient is located in an originating site; and the originating site is in a rural area. ABHW supports eliminating the originating site and geographic restrictions to Medicare reimbursement and increasing the list of eligible providers. Telehealth has the ability to reach a broad range of behavioral health consumers; and by lifting some of the restrictions on the use of telehealth monitoring services in Medicare, your legislation will help patients seek the health care they need.

In closing, we want to thank you for specifically mentioning behavioral health as conditions that can be treated via telehealth and remote patient monitoring under Medicare Advantage. We look forward to continuing to work with your offices on this legislation. If you have any questions, please contact Rebecca Murow Klein at (202) 449-7658 or [klein@abhw.org](mailto:klein@abhw.org).

Sincerely,

Pamela Greenberg,  
President and CEO, ABHW