



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **The Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW) Urges Congressional Action to Extend Medicare Telehealth**

**Washington, D.C.** – The Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW), the national voice for payers that manage behavioral health insurance benefits for 200 million people, urges Congress to protect access to care by extending Medicare telehealth flexibilities and delaying the in-person requirement for mental health services for at least two years, before these flexibilities expire on September 30, 2025.

The Medicare in-person requirement is an additional difficulty for those seeking mental health services that are not imposed on individuals seeking care for other medical conditions or substance use disorders. Allowing the in-person visit requirement to be implemented before accessing mental health services via telehealth would create a barrier to critical, lifesaving behavioral health care at a time when demand for these services, including crisis care, is rising.

“Nearly one in every four Americans, approximately 60 million people, experience a mental illness annually, and right now, there is only one mental health provider for every 340 people in the U.S.,” said ABHW President and CEO Debbie Witchey. “Without telehealth flexibilities, many individuals must travel far from home for appropriate care, and many people with mental health conditions and substance use disorders are unable to make these trips due to health, transportation, or cost limitations. ABHW urges Congress to preserve access to lifesaving care by extending Medicare telehealth flexibilities and delaying the in-person requirement for at least two years so Medicare beneficiaries can continue to get the care they need.

By extending telehealth flexibilities, more people will have the ability to start or continue their care without disruption. ABHW is dedicated to advancing accessible, quality care, and securing long-term telehealth options for behavioral health services is a vital part of this mission.

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### **ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

ABHW is the leading health plan association working to improve access and quality of care for mental health and substance use disorders. ABHW’s members include national

and regional health plans that care for 200 million people. Together, we work to reduce stigma and advance federal policy on mental health and substance use disorder care. ABHW member companies – Aetna, a CVS Health Company; CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield; Carent Behavioral Health, an Elevance Health Company; Centene Corporation; Evernorth; Kaiser Permanente; Lucet; Magellan Health; Molina Healthcare; Optum; and PerformCare, a subsidiary of AmeriHealth Caritas. To learn more, visit [www.abhw.org](http://www.abhw.org) and follow us on [X](#) and [LinkedIn](#).