



July 15, 2020

The Honorable Liz Cheney  
416 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Cheney:

On behalf of National Taxpayers Union (NTU), I write to thank you for introducing H.R. 7338, the “Advancing Telehealth Beyond COVID-19 Act of 2020.” This legislation would go a long way toward deregulating the telehealth industry. These deregulatory efforts offer numerous other benefits, including greater access to medical services for patients living in rural areas, a reduction in avoidable hospitalizations for seniors, and reduced costs for both consumers and healthcare providers.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recently classified 7,655 regions across the US as health professional shortage areas.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 80 million Americans live in these shortage areas. By granting the secretary of HHS the authority to waive various origin site and geographical restrictions around telehealth, this bill would bring vital health services to those 80 million Americans and more. This is especially true for rural states such as Wyoming. People living in rural areas are often forced to make long commutes for face to face consultations, and this legislation would help permanently increase both medical access and savings for the Americans most affected by health professional shortages.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the topic of reducing avoidable hospitalizations has been frequently discussed. This topic is especially important when considering the health risks facing seniors during this pandemic. Even in the absence of COVID-19, though, it is extremely beneficial to seniors to be able to avoid costly in-person appointments and hospitalizations. By deregulating telehealth, this legislation would help reduce avoidable hospitalizations, and would improve the lives and health of America’s seniors in a post-COVID-19 world.

Increasing access to telehealth also increases cost savings for both consumers and providers. One study found that a telehealth appointment costs one third of what an in-person appointment would cost.<sup>2</sup> Not only does this save consumers money, but it also lowers costs for medical providers by saving them time and resources. Your bill would help seniors and providers realize these savings by removing various restrictions on health care professionals providing access to smart devices and other technologies.

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<sup>1</sup> Health Resources and Services Administration. (2020). “Shortage Areas.” Retrieved from: <https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/shortage-areas> (Accessed June 29, 2020.)

<sup>2</sup> Pifer, Rebecca. “Humana Study Touts Telehealth Cuts, with Comparable Follow-Ups.” Healthcare Dive, July 18, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.healthcaredive.com/news/humana-study-touts-telehealth-cost-cuts-with-comparable-follow-ups/527854/> (Accessed June 29, 2020.)

The “Advancing Telehealth Beyond COVID-19 Act of 2020” is a practical, freedom-oriented approach to health care challenges. It will increase efficiency, decrease costs, and promote greater access to healthcare services for millions of Americans. We thank you for your dedication to this issue and look forward to helping ensure this legislation reaches the President’s desk.

Sincerely,

Andrew Lautz  
Policy and Government Affairs Manager

CC: The Honorable Greg Gianforte  
The Honorable David Kustoff  
The Honorable Jason Smith