



200 First Street SW  
Rochester, Minnesota 55905

December 7, 2020

Senator Michelle Benson  
Chair, HHS Finance and Policy  
3109 Minnesota Senate Bldg.  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Representative Tina Liebling  
Chair, HHS Finance Division  
477 State Office Bldg.  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Sen. Benson and Rep. Liebling,

As associate dean of Mayo Clinic's Center for Connected Care, with oversight over the modalities used by Mayo Clinic care teams to provide care to patients virtually and remotely, thank you for your ongoing leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. As you continue to assess the needs and impact of this pandemic, on behalf of Mayo Clinic, I would like to share strong support for the continuation of flexibilities temporarily granted for care provided remotely through the remainder of the pandemic and beyond.

More than one million people from all 50 states and 135 countries come to Mayo Clinic to receive the highest quality care at sites in Minnesota, Arizona, Florida and Wisconsin. As part of the largest integrated, not-for-profit medical group practice in the world, Mayo Clinic is dedicated to finding answers for patients through medical care, research and education. With nearly 70,000 employees, Mayo Clinic brings together teams of specialists with a persistent and unwavering commitment to excellence. While many types of care are best provided in person, for years Mayo Clinic has demonstrated the benefits of providing care virtually to some patients in appropriate situations, and this effort has only grown during the pandemic. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Mayo Clinic has conducted more telehealth visits per day at all of its sites than all enterprise-wide telehealth visits combined for 2019.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has presented many challenges, perhaps its greatest opportunity and legacy will be the transformation in the practice of health care delivery itself. The pandemic has catalyzed use of remote care and telehealth, allowing patients to access care without risking virus exposure and advancing technologies that hold great promise to improve access, outcomes and equity for health care moving forward. While these efforts have increased access to allow for care delivery in safe and local environments, with many patients being able to conduct these visits from home, recent data received from Mayo Clinic patient surveys also indicate that patients are equally satisfied with video visits as with in-person visits overall.

Over the last several months, patients have experienced real benefit to care appointments conducted via telephone. For some patients with limited access to broadband or high-speed internet, audio-only appointment options still allow a patient to receive care without burden or increased risk of exposure by needing to travel. Of course, allowing patients to receive this care where they are has also been essential to minimizing exposure risk while still caring for patients and their ongoing health needs.

I understand that you will be imminently considering proposals before your committees and legislative bodies to extend certain flexibilities expanding the practice of telehealth during the pandemic, including continued support for services provided in a patient's residence and via telephone. Mayo Clinic strongly urges your support of such efforts as care services provided remotely via telehealth operations have proven to be beneficial, effective and convenient for patients. I also look forward to a broader conversation in the upcoming session on how to ensure Minnesota continues its leadership in health care delivery, particularly in the increasingly important and competitive field of telehealth, in coming years.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,



Steve Ommen, M.D.  
Associate Dean  
Center for Connected Care