



*We Will Empower Bold Change to Elevate  
Human Flourishing.<sup>SM</sup>*

May 15, 2024

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Chair  
House Energy and Commerce Committee  
United States House Representatives  
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Frank Pallone  
Ranking Member  
House Energy and Commerce Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Chair McMorris Rodgers and Ranking Member Pallone:

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), the national leadership organization representing more than 2,200 Catholic healthcare systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, clinics, service providers, and organizations, I would like to take this opportunity to express our views on legislation being considered by the committee during its May 16<sup>th</sup> mark-up.

As the largest provider of not-for-profit health care services in the nation, the Catholic health care ministry, with 674 hospitals including more than 700,000 full-time and part-time employees and 1200 long-term care facilities, is on the frontlines responding to community needs across our country. Catholic hospitals and providers have been at the leading edge of expanding the use of telehealth programs across the country, especially in rural communities.

In light of this work and experience, we welcome the opportunity to **support H.R. 7623, “Telehealth Modernization Act of 2024.”** Telehealth is an important resource for connecting patients to vital health care services by supporting better health outcomes, more patient choice and greater health access to people across the country. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the profound impact greater access to telehealth has had for millions of Americans across the country. By connecting patients to a range of health care services through videoconferencing, remote monitoring, electronic consults, and wireless communications, telehealth programs have brought access to specialized care to people who often went without or had to travel long-distance for care. Through telehealth, health care providers have helped ensure patients receive the care they need, when they need it, while also providing greater access to health care consultations with specialists for those living in rural and low-income communities. Telehealth is a critical tool in promoting greater health access and equity, particularly for low-income and vulnerable communities.

The telehealth flexibilities created as part of the COVID-19 pandemic response have supported access to health care for more than 30 million Americans on Medicare alone. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, over 70 million people used telehealth services. Today, telehealth continues to provide access to care while expanding access to specialized care consultations. Last year, one in seven patients reported having used a telehealth visit that would have otherwise sought care in an emergency room. In addition, access to neonatal telehealth has reduced hospital transfers by nearly 30%.<sup>1</sup> Telehealth flexibilities have played an increasingly important means of ensuring more people have affordable and quality health care, regardless of geography or social and economic barriers. We,

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<sup>1</sup> Telehealth Access for America, <https://telehealthaccessforamerica.org/benefits/>



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support making telehealth flexibilities permanent, as proposed in the “Telehealth Modernization Act of 2024” so that providers and their patients can have greater security and continue to build upon the work of expanding access to health care through telehealth.

**H.R.7858, “Telehealth Enhancement for Mental Health Act of 2024,”** marks a critical first step towards further building upon the gains of telehealth-based mental health by providing a specific modifier or code for mental health through telehealth. This unique modifier would help streamline the billing and reimbursement process for telehealth-based mental health services and amplify access to those in need, regardless of geographic barriers. Despite the continued increasing need and demand for mental health care, nearly one-third of the U.S. population lives in areas that are underserved by mental health professionals.<sup>2</sup> **We support the “Telehealth Enhancement for Mental Health Act of 2024” as an important step towards further strengthening the use of tele-mental health to serve communities in need.**

**H.R. 3227, the “Ensuring Seniors’ Access to Quality Care Act,”** would allow nursing home providers who have been forced to suspend their in-house training of certified nurse aids (CNA) because of compliance penalties to resume this training after they have addressed the penalties and demonstrated a return to compliance. Currently, programs have to wait two years to renew training programs, even though the provider has addressed the concerns and is in compliance. Allowing providers to immediately address the concerns and restart their training programs will help to bolster the health workforce, which continues to face historic shortages of CNAs. At a time when nursing home providers face new challenges to recruit and retain qualified staff and face new mandates on nursing staffing minimums, having a robust training program for CNAs is critical for addressing workforce shortages and ensuring qualified workers deliver quality care for our country’s aging population. **We therefore support the Ensuring Seniors’ Access to Quality Care Act.**

As Catholic health care providers, we are committed to ensuring that everyone in our nation has access to affordable health care. CHA stands ready to continue to work with you on strengthening our nation’s health system to provide access, coverage, and affordability for everyone. Please feel free to contact Lucas Swanepoel, Senior Director of Government Relations ([Lswanepoel@chausa.org](mailto:Lswanepoel@chausa.org)), or Paulo Pontemayor, Senior Director of Government Relations ([Ppontemayor@chausa.org](mailto:Ppontemayor@chausa.org)) if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sr. Mary Haddad".

Sr. Mary Haddad, RSM  
President and CEO

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<sup>2</sup> Resneck Jr., Jack, “Lack of access to evidence-based mental health care poses grave threat” <https://www.ama-assn.org/about/leadership/lack-access-evidence-based-mental-health-care-poses-grave-threat>