

May 14, 2021

**ILLINOIS HEALTH AND HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION  
STATE ADVOCACY ALERT**

**SUBJECT: IHA Alert: Urge Senate Committee to Pass Telehealth Bill (HB3498)**

The Illinois General Assembly has only two weeks left in the Spring session to address several issues of vital concern to the hospital community, including telehealth coverage and payment parity.

On Wednesday, May 19, at 4:30 p.m., the Senate Insurance Committee will hold a hearing on House Bill 3498, major telehealth legislation strongly supported by the Coalition to Protect Telehealth, a group of 36 leading healthcare and patient advocacy organizations including IHA. The Illinois House passed the bill on April 23 by a vote of 110-0. In order to continue to advance through the legislative process, the bill must pass out of the committee and then be passed by the full Senate before May 31.

While the bill has strong bipartisan support with 29 Senate sponsors (see the list here), it needs to pass out of the Insurance Committee and earn at least 30 Yes votes on the Senate floor. That's why we must collectively push for support in the Senate to gain final approval of this critically important legislation.

**ACTIONS REQUESTED:** Submit an electronic witness slip to the Senate Insurance Committee, supporting House Bill 3498, by clicking here. When you fill out the form, be sure to check the "Proponent" circle in Section III, and the "Record of Appearance Only" box in Section IV.

If your Senator is a member of the committee, please reach out to her/him and urge her/him to vote Yes on HB3498 at the committee hearing next Wednesday. Click here to see the list of committee members and the hospitals in their districts.

Also, contact your state Senator and urge her/him to co-sponsor House Bill 3498. To look up your state Senator and her/his contact information, click here, go to the "Find Officials" section, and fill in your local address information. To send an email message to your Senator, click here.

For more information about House Bill 3498, see a fact sheet and go to the Coalition's website, <https://protectillinoistelehealth.org>.

**Suggested Talking Points**

- I urge you to co-sponsor House Bill 3498, bipartisan legislation with 29 sponsors in the Senate, to ensure that Illinoisans continue to have access to innovative

telehealth services after the COVID-19 pandemic – this will reduce access barriers and improve patient outcomes.

- Early in the pandemic, the Governor and the Department of Healthcare and Family Services lifted longstanding barriers to healthcare via telehealth for commercial health plans and Medicaid.
- In response, healthcare providers rapidly invested in new technology, adjusted clinical workflows and educated staff, patients and clinicians on telehealth delivery – resulting in dramatic increases in the use of telehealth services.
- To ensure that accessible, safe and reliable telehealth that improves patient outcomes continues to be provided after the pandemic, we need the General Assembly to pass House Bill 3498 for both coverage and payment parity with in-person services.
- Payment parity – reimbursing telehealth at the same rate as in-person care – is the key to removing existing barriers to patient access and provider adoption, paving the way for widespread implementation of telehealth.
- Telehealth use has driven a reduction of missed appointments, increased care plan adherence and improved chronic disease management.
- In recent surveys, more than 70% of Illinois hospital respondents and 78% of community-based behavioral healthcare respondents reported that telehealth has helped drive a reduction in the rates at which patients missed appointments. Surveys of Illinois physicians, community health centers, and specialized mental health and substance use disorder treatment providers have also revealed similar dramatic reductions in missed appointments.
- Access barriers that exacerbate healthcare disparities such as transportation, geographic isolation from healthcare providers, lost income, missed work and school, or the stigma of seeking help are greatly reduced or eliminated when telehealth is used.
- A new report just issued by the Illinois Department of Public Health strongly recommends that “health insurance plans, including Illinois Medicaid, should reimburse for telehealth, including phone-based services, regardless of patient or provider location” to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality.
- Telehealth empowers patients to address care needs swiftly, preventing conditions from worsening and requiring unnecessary visits to urgent care or a hospital.
- Without action by the General Assembly, providers will not have the certainty they need to continue investing in and utilizing new care delivery tools – and Illinoisans will abruptly lose access to the telehealth services they have relied on during the pandemic.
- House Bill 3498 prohibits geographic or facility restrictions on telehealth services, and allows patients to be treated via telehealth in their home.

- Patients will not be required to use a separate panel of providers or professionals to receive telehealth services, nor will they be required to prove a hardship or access barrier in order to receive telehealth services.
- This legislation further protects patient preference by establishing that a patient cannot be required to use telehealth services.
- Please co-sponsor House Bill 3498 to maintain patient access to quality healthcare.