



Tele-Mental Health Improvement Act

Congressman David Trone (D-MD) and Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA)

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated an existing mental health crisis. Americans nationwide are feeling the pressures of a public health emergency, social isolation, and an economic crisis. Additionally, our essential workers are experiencing increased pressure, stress, and burnout as a result of COVID-19. McKinsey & Company predicts the COVID-19 pandemic could result in a 50% increase in behavioral health conditions.¹

Currently, private insurance providers aren't required to cover mental health and substance use disorder services through telehealth at the same reimbursement rate for the same services provided through an in-person visit. Full access to care is a persistent issue for Americans, particularly individuals with mental health conditions and substance use disorders.

Considering the added impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we must expand access to mental health services via telehealth in order to support patients and their behavioral health providers throughout the duration of the public health emergency.

About the Legislation

The *Tele-Mental Health Improvement Act* would improve access to tele-mental health during the length of the COVID-19 public health emergency by:

- Requiring ERISA plans to cover mental health and substance use disorder services provided through telehealth at the same reimbursement rate for the same services provided through an in-person visit.
- Prohibiting health plans from imposing additional barriers to accessing tele-mental health services.
- Directing health plans to inform enrollees how they can access tele-mental health and substance use disorder services.
- Requiring the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to issue a report on the impact of telehealth parity measures on the use of telehealth and in-person services.

¹Coe, Erica; Enomoto, Kana; Finn, Patrick, Stenson; Stenson, John; Weber, Kyle. "Understanding the hidden costs of COVID-19's potential impact on US healthcare." McKinsey & Company. September 4, 2020.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare-systems-and-services/our-insights/understanding-the-hidden-costs-of-covid-19s-potential-impact-on-us-healthcare#>