

Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services
c/o Darlene Simoneau
Cross Building, Room 220
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 791 *An Act Regarding Telehealth Regulations*

Dear Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and other members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services,

NASW Maine urges you include payment parity for telehealth and telephonic services in LD 791. No payment parity is a disincentive to providing telehealth and will result in telehealth services not happening. Telehealth is THE number one concern to social workers from around the state.

One of the “silver linings” of the COVID pandemic was the Governor’s emergency legislation that incentivized telehealth services through payment parity. Behavioral health agencies saw reduced no-shows and an upsurge in ability to provide care to people who were “shut ins” due to debilitating depression, anxiety, and trauma disorders. Outpatient medical facilities were better able to provide care that addresses prevention and management of chronic disease, to reduce negative disease outcomes through improved lifestyle and medical management.

Mental health and lifestyle choices are two major factors that affect disease burden, quality of life and death (WHO). Telehealth improves our ability to address these factors. We need to take the good things we have learned over this past year and continue to improve the behavioral and medical care for all Mainers.

We urge you to include payment parity and remove any other disincentives in providing telehealth and audio-only telehealth services in LD791.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Schirmer, LCSW
Co-Chair, Policy Committee
Vice President of the Board
NASW Maine

Risk factors of ill health among older people. WHO Europe. <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Life-stages/healthy-ageing/data-and-statistics/risk-factors-of-ill-health-among-older-people#:~:text=Poor%20nutrition%2C%20physical%20inactivity%2C%20tobacco,of%20the%20deaths%20in%20the>