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June 14, 2023

The Honorable Joe Manchin III
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
506 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Joni Ernst
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: The *Protecting Rural Telehealth Access Act (S. 1636)*

Dear Senators Manchin, Ernst, Shaheen, and Moran:

I write on behalf of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI) to thank you for your leadership in reintroducing S.1636, the *Protecting Rural Telehealth Access Act*, and to offer the AAAAI's support. We urge Congress to enact this legislation to modernize and expand our healthcare delivery system to continue support for patient access to telehealth services as we transition beyond the pandemic.

Established in 1943, AAAAI is a professional organization with more than 7,000 members in the United States, Canada and 72 other countries. This membership includes board certified allergist/immunologists, other medical specialists, allied health and related healthcare professionals – all with a special interest in the research and treatment of patients with allergic and immunological diseases.

AAAAI's members treat a variety of patients that are at a disproportionately higher risk for serious and potentially life-threatening complications related to COVID-19, including those with compromised immune systems and asthma. AAAAI's members are also uniquely qualified to diagnose and treat seasonal allergies. During the pandemic, the ability for our members to utilize telehealth services to differentiate the symptoms of COVID-19 from seasonal allergies served as a critical tool in both keeping patients from necessary but potentially dangerous visits to their doctor and relieve the bandwidth issues expected at physician offices, urgent care centers, and emergency rooms across the country as the virus continues to spread. Telehealth waivers and

(more)

flexibilities also allowed allergists to increase their reach to more distant and rural communities improving access to care.

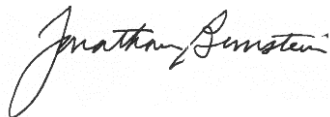
Through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) numerous virtual care and telehealth flexibilities offered through rulemakings related to the COVID-19 pandemic, AAAAI members reported increased patient uptake of telehealth and virtual technology platforms that are helping them diagnose, treat, and manage the care of Medicare and Medicaid patients with allergies, asthma, and other respiratory and immunologic diseases. The Academy appreciates Congress' efforts to extend these flexibilities beyond the termination of the COVID-19 public health emergency in May. The AAAAI also supports legislative efforts to make certain telehealth flexibilities permanent.

Given AAAAI members' positive experiences with telehealth, our organization especially appreciates the provisions in the *Protecting Rural Telehealth Access Act* that would provide payment-parity for audio-only health services for clinically appropriate appointments and waive permanently certain geographic restrictions on telehealth services and expand originating sites to include the home and other sites.

Thank you for your leadership in introducing legislation to ensure flexible patient access to care through telehealth services. The AAAAI looks forward to working with you to advance the *Protecting Rural Telehealth Access Act* in the 118th Congress.

As issues related to allergies, asthma, and immunological disorders arise, I encourage you to contact Sheila Heitzig, JD, MNM, CAE, AAAAI Director of Practice and Policy, at (414) 272-6071 or sheitzig@aaaai.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jonathan A. Bernstein".

Jonathan A. Bernstein, MD FAAAAI
President, American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology