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February 18, 2026

The Honorable Chris Pappas
U.S. House of Representatives
452 Cannon HOB
Washington, D.C. 205105

The Honorable Zachary Nunn
U.S. House of Representatives
1410 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: The *Protecting Rural Telehealth Access Act* (H.R.7444)

Dear Representatives Pappas and Nunn:

I write on behalf of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI) to thank you for your leadership in reintroducing H.R.7444, 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 disproportionally higher risk for serious and potentially life-threatening complications related to respiratory illnesses, including those with compromised immune systems and asthma. AAAAI's members are also uniquely qualified to diagnose and treat seasonal allergies. During the COVID-19 public health emergency, AAAAI members utilized telehealth services to differentiate the symptoms of COVID-19 from seasonal allergies. Telehealth serves as a critical tool in both keeping patients from necessary but potentially dangerous visits to their doctor and helps relieve bandwidth issues at physician offices, urgent care centers, and emergency rooms across the country. Telehealth waivers and flexibilities also allowed allergists to increase their reach to patients in more distant and rural communities improving access to care.

(More)

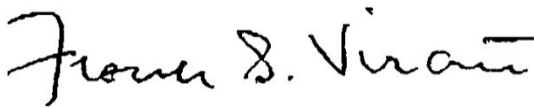
AAAAI members have reported increased patient uptake of telehealth and virtual technology platforms that are helping them diagnose, treat, and manage the care of Medicare and Medicaid patients with allergies, asthma, and other respiratory and immunologic diseases. The Academy appreciates Congress' efforts to extend these flexibilities through 2027 as part of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026*. The AAAAI supports making 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 permanently waive certain geographic restrictions on telehealth services and expand originating sites to include the home and other sites.

Thank you for your leadership in reintroducing 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*.

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 black ink that reads "Frank S. Virant". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Frank S. Virant, MD, FAAAAI
President, American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology