



March 19, 2021

Kansas Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
RE: House Bill 2208

Dear Chairman Hilderbrand and members of the Committee:

On behalf of Americans for Prosperity (AFP), I am here to testify in support of House Bill 2208. AFP activists engage friends and neighbors on key issues and advocate for building a patient-centered health care system that lowers costs, increase choices, and improves access for millions of people seeking relief. The reforms outlined in the bill to expand access to telehealth would promote all these important goals.

Over the past several months, telehealth has played an important role helping health care providers combat COVID-19, largely thanks to emergency reforms implemented by Kansas' Governor and state legislature. In March, Gov. Kelly issued an executive order that authorized out-of-state health care providers to deliver virtual care to Kansas patients.ⁱ Subsequently, the legislature enacted legislation extending these reforms into early 2021.ⁱⁱ

These temporary measures have empowered highly-qualified health care providers from other states to virtually consult and screen patients, remotely monitor patients conditions, and remotely advise distant facilities to treat patients with COVID. As a result of these changes, the number of telehealth visits delivered in Kansas and surrounding states increased 4,756 percent between December 2019 and December 2020.ⁱⁱⁱ

Unfortunately, this dramatic expansion of care is dependent on temporary reforms that expire at the end of March. Absent additional action from lawmakers, patients will lose access to the essential services and support telehealth provides when the emergency declaration ends.

This bill would ensure Kansas can continue to access lifesaving virtual care long after this pandemic ends. This proposal would permanently authorize physicians licensed in other states to provide telehealth to Kansas residents.

These reforms will empower highly-qualified providers to deliver essential health services to patients in the convenience of their home. Nearly 40 percent of all health care services traditionally delivered in-person can be virtually provided through telehealth.^{iv} Increase access to virtual care will especially benefit the 780,000 Kansans who live in rural and underserved communities that lack reliable access to primary care professionals.^v

Furthermore, expanding telehealth will provide patients an affordable health care option. Data

released from the popular telehealth platform Teladoc shows the average telehealth consultation costs just \$40.^{vi} By comparison, the typical cost of an in-person primary care visit is \$160.^{vii}

This committee can ensure more families receive the high quality and affordable health care they need by empowering health care professionals to deliver more virtual care. Please vote “Yes” on this bill in committee to strengthen health care access, lower costs, and end Kansas' COVID-19 pandemic.

We thank you for the opportunity to address this critical issue and we look forward to working with the committee to craft real reforms that expand access to affordable and high-quality health care for all Kansans.

Sincerely,

Americans for Prosperity

ⁱ <https://governor.kansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/E.O.-20-08.pdf>

ⁱⁱ http://www.kslegislature.org/li_2020s/b2020s/measures/hb2016/

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://s3.amazonaws.com/media2.fairhealth.org/infographic/telehealth/dec-2020-midwest-telehealth.pdf>

^{iv} <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23406075/>

^v <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/primary-care-health-professional-shortage-areas-hpsas/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>

^{vi} https://s21.q4cdn.com/672268105/files/doc_presentations/2017/09/Teladoc-Investor-Presentation-September-2017.pdf

^{vii} <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/05/150504163456.htm>