

January 20, 2021

Dear Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

I am a licensed physical therapist from Grand Forks. I am submitting this written testimony on behalf of APTA North Dakota, the membership association of physical therapists and physical therapist assistants in North Dakota. I currently serve as president for this association.

The pandemic has been a challenge to all people in so many ways and I am certain all are more than ready to somehow put it behind us. A silver lining realized by many health care practitioners is the advantages and uses of telehealth in serving the citizens of North Dakota, especially those from very rural parts of the state. Yes, for many patients, 'in-clinic' appointments have returned; however, there are many pros of being able to use telehealth when in-person care cannot happen.

- Decreased cancellations due to weather or other travel related issues
- Decreased cancellations due to family member issues (i.e. no child care, no vehicle, sick sibling)
- Real-time home programming and addressing challenges with caregivers involved in the session
- Ability to see the home environment to assess for safety issues, barriers, etc.
- More efficient communication with parents/caregivers: no need for an extra phone call to discuss how sessions went
- More functional approach to treatment as activities must to be tailored to the home environment

The pandemic has made us pivot in our thinking about health care delivery and even methods of teaching our entry-level students to prepare them for the realities of practice with use of telehealth. Telehealth does not replace all patient care, but certainly has benefits when it is needed.

Whether services are provided in-person or via telehealth, the provider's time is equally as important as the care being delivered. We urge you to support payment parity for telehealth services to ensure that these services are reimbursed at the same rate as services provided in-person and ask you to pass SB 2179.

Sincerely,

Cindy Flom-Meland

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