



July 18, 2008

The Honorable Mike Thompson
United States House of Representatives
231 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

**Association of
American Medical Colleges**
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Darrell G. Kirch, M.D.
President and Chief Executive Officer

Dear Representative Thompson:

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) supports H.R. 6163, the “Medicare Telehealth Enhancement Act of 2008.” The bill would take important steps forward to advance telehealth by removing several barriers that impede the expansion of telehealth services to rural and other underserved populations. Both rural and urban patients can face health care access challenges related to geography, transportation, and physician availability. Your proposed expansion of telehealth services under the Medicare program would help address such serious health care access problems.

In particular, your legislation encourages greater participation in telehealth services by expanding the number of providers eligible for Medicare reimbursement. It would also facilitate interstate telehealth services, while maintaining state quality and safety controls.

Your bill also enhances the collection of treatment data. It is our hope that the resulting data will support improved payment incentives for the use of telehealth services, since such services require significant technology investments by providers.

The AAMC believes that the nation must take steps to address the growing shortage of physicians and other providers by increasing the supply of health professionals and also by finding ways to improve access to care with limited human resources. Expanding telehealth will help enable our 100,000 teaching physicians and nearly 400 teaching hospitals and health systems to share their knowledge and expertise with patients beyond their physical walls.

Thank you for your efforts on this vital issue. AAMC and its members look forward to working with you on the successful passage of H.R. 6163.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darrell G. Kirch".

Darrell G. Kirch, M.D.