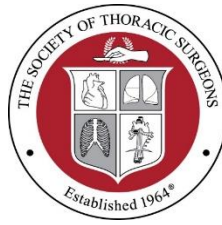


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June 28, 2023

The Honorable Brian Schatz
United States Senate
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
United States Senate
425 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ben Cardin
United States Senate
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Thune
United States Senate
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mark Warner
United States House of Representatives
703 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: S. 2016 The Creating Opportunities Now for Necessary and Effective Care Technologies (CONNECT) for Health Act.

Dear Senators Schatz, Wicker, Cardin, Thune, and Warner,

On behalf of The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS), I would like to thank you for reintroducing S. 2016, the Creating Opportunities Now for Necessary and Effective Care Technologies (CONNECT) for Health Act. This important legislation builds upon actions already taken by Congress to ensure patients can maintain a stable relationship with their health care provider via telehealth services. Currently, many essential Medicare telehealth flexibilities are set to expire on December 31, 2024.

Founded in 1964, STS is a not-for-profit organization representing more than 7,700 surgeons, researchers, and allied healthcare professionals worldwide who are dedicated to ensuring the best possible outcomes for surgeries of the heart, lungs, and esophagus, as well as other surgical procedures within the chest.

The COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) illustrated how valuable a tool telehealth can be for all communities, including those that are in rural or underserved communities. Access to

telehealth services has been shown to improve access to health care. Virtual care has provided unprecedented access for patients, but the future of telehealth medicine remains uncertain. According to a 2022 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 37.0% of all adults had utilized telehealth medicine in the past 12 months.¹ Important legislation like yours would ensure that all communities, including rural and underserved areas, will not go over a “telehealth cliff” and lose access to critical services.

Thank you for your dedication to improving the health and well-being of all Americans, including those in rural and underserved communities. We look forward to working with you to ensure continued coverage of necessary Medicare telehealth services. Please contact Derek Brandt, Vice President of Government Affairs, at dbrandt@sts.org, or Iain Adams, Government Relations Coordinator at iadams@sts.org, should you need additional information or clarification.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Thomas E. MacGillivray". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Thomas E. MacGillivray, MD
President