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# United States Senate

COMMITTEES:  
COMMERCE, SCIENCE,  
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ENERGY AND  
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FOREIGN RELATIONS

March 18, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
S-230, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
S-221, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer,

I am writing to request that upcoming legislation related to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak include language to allow Medicare to reimburse rural health clinics (RHCs) and federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) for telehealth services. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic and it continues to threaten the health and safety of Americans.

On March 13, 2020, President Trump declared a national emergency under the Stafford Act. On January 31, 2020, Secretary Alex Azar declared a public health emergency under the Public Health Service Act. Following those dual-emergency declarations, Administrator Seema Verma took the commendable step to waive existing requirements and expand access to telehealth. While this expansion will benefit many types of providers and their patients, it does not apply to RHCs and FQHCs due to limiting legal definitions.

RHCs and FQHCs play a critical role in providing health care services to vulnerable, underserved populations. Especially at this time when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has released crucial social distancing guidance, we must ensure that our most vulnerable be able to access telehealth services without limiting restrictions. It is important that Congress act quickly to expand this access to Americans who receive care through RHCs and FQHCs.

We cannot let red tape stand in the way of quality health care, and I request consideration of this authorization that will increase access to critical telehealth services.

Sincerely,



Cory Gardner  
United States Senator