

THE NEW ENGLAND COUNCIL

October 29, 2020

New England Senate Delegation

Dear Senators,

On behalf of The New England Council, I write to encourage you to support the Temporary Reciprocity to Ensure Access to Treatment (TREAT) Act (S. 4421). This bipartisan legislation would provide temporary reciprocity for health practitioners practicing telehealth during the COVID-19 emergency. During this time of uncertainty, it is crucial that patients are able to continue to see providers with whom they have established relationships, especially for mental health.

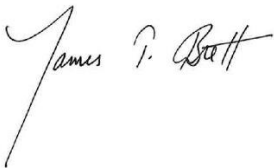
As you know, The New England Council's membership includes a wide array of healthcare organizations, including hospitals, behavioral health providers, and insurers. In addition, we count over 70 college and universities throughout the region as members. A wide array of members in both the healthcare and higher education industries have identified this as a concern for continuing to provide adequate care for their communities during this time. The issue of cross-border access to mental health telehealth services is particularly relevant for college and university student population, who have seen changes to their housing and living situations and may be using telehealth as they move across state borders and learn remotely.

While many states have implemented temporary reciprocity or other relief, there is no uniform guidance. Currently, health professions must maintain a license in each state they practice or work through each state's regulations to treat patients. Telehealth has become vital during this crisis for continuing patient care and providers need the ability to continue that care as patients relocate. At the same time, state actions have been varied, inconsistent and time-limited. Many of the temporary exemptions put in place amid the pandemic have or are due to expire. As students prepare to leave campus for Thanksgiving, in many cases not returning until the spring, we believe it is crucial to address this issue in a timely manner.

Under the TREAT Act, a provider who holds a valid license in good standing anywhere can practice everywhere for the duration of the emergency declaration. This legislation would provide immediate remedy and allow for reimplementation for a comparable national emergency in the future. It allows for a temporary reciprocity period and after the national emergency, would revert to current licensing law.

We believe that the TREAT Act would provide a practical solution to ensure consistent access to mental health services during this unusual and challenging time, and in the event of future emergency situation. We encourage you to consider co-sponsoring the bill and would be grateful for your support. If you or your staff have any question, please feel free to contact me or a member of our staff.

Sincerely,



James T. Brett
President & CEO

The New England Council

98 North Washington Street, Suite 303 • Boston, Massachusetts 02114 • (617) 723-4009
1411 K Street, NW, Suite 700 • Washington, DC 20005 • (202) 547-0048
www.newenglandcouncil.com