



January 5, 2022

Testimony on Act 21 to the Joint Committee

House Committee on Health Care and Senate Committee on Health and Welfare

Respectfully Submitted by

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Senators and Representatives,

ANA-Vermont supports the use of telehealth that greatly benefits rural and underserved communities, and assists discharge teaching across state lines amongst its many benefits. As the committees are aware, the waiver authorized by Act 6 expires on March 31, 2022. Safe practice of telehealth to ensure continuity of care and adequate access for all patients has become essential. College students have already expressed fear that their current out-of-state mental health provider telehealth services may be affected. Hence, a new policy must be in place expeditiously.

As part of the Interstate Work Group, that agreed upon the wording used in Lauren Hibbert, Director, Office of Professional Regulation's (OPR) testimony, ANA-Vermont supports the need for providers to initially obtain a temporary registration, then a tiered approach by June 30, 2023. While nurses and physicians have compacts that ensure the health professional providing services is credentialed, and has an unencumbered license, in the majority of states, not all health professions do. Even in the nursing profession, not every state belongs to the compact, so a plan for these states is needed. The rules for practice can vary between states, such as the ability to independently practice and prescribe. Registration will allow uninterrupted provider service, and access to care for patients.

The impact on the nurse compact was carefully considered. The information shared today regarding Act 21 is complex, yet the work group worked hard and thoughtfully together to ensure stakeholder voices were heard. Input was received from nurse practitioners as well as registered nurses and other stakeholder groups, collaborating to achieve a plan that would minimize barriers to telehealth, yet keep Vermonters safe. The plan ensures out-of-state telehealth providers comply with Vermont's standard of care for the profession, and minimizes barriers to access of care.

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