

Representatives Lippert, Donahue, Houghton, Black, Burrows, Cina, Cordes, Goldman, Long, Page, and Peterson:

I strongly urge you to continue to require reimbursement for telephone-only health care. I am a recently retired primary care pediatrician with 30+ years of experience providing primary health care to Vermont children and their families. I have had extensive experience, all of it occurring *before* the current pandemic, providing both reimbursed in-person and unreimbursed telephone care. I am in an excellent position to comment on the value of telephone-only care and the reasons why it should be reimbursed on parity with in-person care.

Telephone-only health care works for many health problems and is wonderfully effective for patients and their families. It is especially helpful for the most vulnerable of our patients and families – those for whom travel and time spent away from home poses enormous burdens. Those most affected by the social determinants of health such as advanced age, low income, minority status, lack of transportation, and rural residence and who lack good internet access are the ones who are most helped by telephone-only care. Many health care encounters require nothing more than careful communication between a patient and a trusted health care professional. Such encounters can prevent costly and unnecessary visits to hospital emergency rooms.

Physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants have the knowledge and skills to use telephone-only care wisely and will turn to it when it best serves the patient and provides access for those who cannot readily leave home. Providing telephone-only care is not cheap – it costs practices and clinics in terms of resources, time spent by clinicians, and by their staff. It should be reimbursed at the same rate as in-person care in order to best serve Vermonters.

I urge you to support continued reimbursement for these important, telephone-only health care visits.

Sincerely,

Mort Wasserman

**R. “Mort” Wasserman, MD, MPH (*he, him, his*)
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