



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian Kavanagh

## Kavanagh Seeks Rule Changes to Let Community Health Centers Provide 'Telehealth' Services in COVID-19 Crisis

BRIAN KAVANAGH March 26, 2020

| ISSUE: **MEDICAID, TELEHEALTH, COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS**



On March 26, Senator Kavanagh and 16 Senate colleagues wrote to Governor Cuomo calling for modifications to State regulations to permit telehealth appointments to be eligible for Medicaid wrap payments; this would allow clinics and healthcare centers to protect New Yorkers without risking a loss of funding at a time when their services are critically needed. The text of the Senators' letter is below; the original may be viewed via the link above.

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March 26, 2020

Governor Andrew Cuomo

The Executive Chamber

Capitol

Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Thank you for all that you and your staff are doing to protect New Yorkers as we respond to the COVID-19 crisis. We write regarding an issue that is affecting our community health organizations, which play an essential role in promoting the wellbeing of residents of our communities, by providing trusted, linguistically and culturally competent healthcare.

Under current State regulations, telehealth appointments are not eligible for Medicaid wrap payments because, in normal times, telehealth appointments typically augment in-person visits rather than replacing them. Given the COVID-19 crisis, the State's public health officials have mandated telehealth appointments for patients, in lieu of in-person appointments. Under these circumstances, telehealth appointments require the same amount of resources and the same number of staff that in-person appointments would require, and they are the safest and most effective way for clinics and health care centers to provide care to patients.

We urge you to modify State regulations to make full-length telehealth appointments, including those conducted entirely by phone, eligible for the same types of state-funded coverage as in-person appointments, at least for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis.

Covering telehealth appointments would enable clinics and healthcare centers to protect New Yorkers without risking a loss of funding at a time when their services are critically

needed.

If you or your staff would like to discuss this matter further, please feel free to contact any of us directly or via Eliana Cohen in Senator Kavanagh's office, at 212-298-5565.

Sincerely,

Senator Brian Kavanagh

Senator Alessandra Biaggi

Senator David Carlucci

Senator Leroy Comrie

Senator Simcha Felder

Senator Andrew Gounardes

Senator Brad Hoylman

Senator Robert Jackson

Senator Liz Kruger

Senator Monica Martinez

Senator Velmanette Montgomery

Senator Zellnor Myrie

Senator Kevin Parker

Senator Jessica Ramos

Senator Julia Salazar

Senator Diane Savino

Senator Kevin Thomas