

# TELE-MENTAL HEALTH IMPROVEMENT ACT (S. 3792)

Sens. Tina Smith (D-MN) & Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)

## ISSUE

Recent research shows that COVID-19 has led to an increase in eating disorders behaviors including restriction and binge eating, underscoring the need to open up access to care and provide treatment flexibility via telehealth for people affected by eating disorders.

- **4,000% increase** in commercial telehealth claims year-to-year
- **1/3 of telehealth claims** are mental health claims
- Telehealth not covered for all levels of care
- **Only 13 states** require telehealth services be covered at the same rate as in-person
- Medicare and TRICARE have greatly expanded telehealth coverage **during the Public Health Emergency**
- **COVID-19 has significantly affected persons with eating disorders**, with recent research showing increases in eating disorders behaviors including restrictive behaviors in people with anorexia nervosa, and binge-eating behaviors in people with binge-eating disorder and bulimia.

## SOLUTION

Sens. Smith and Murkowski's bipartisan Tele-Mental Health Improvement Act would improve access to tele-mental health services for the duration of the Public Health Emergency by:

- Requiring commercial plans to cover mental health and substance use disorder services provided through tele-mental health at the same reimbursement rates as what would have been received for the same services provided in-person
- Prohibiting health plans from imposing additional barriers on access to tele-mental health
- Directing health plans to inform enrollees on how they can access mental health and substance use disorders services via tele-mental health; and
- Requiring the Department of Health and Human Services to issue a report on the impact of telehealth parity measures on the use of tele-mental health and in-person services.

## ENDORSED BY

- Alaska Eating Disorders Alliance
- American Psychiatric Association
- American Society of Addiction Medicine
- Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action\*
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

- NAMI Minnesota
- National Council for Behavioral Health
- Residential Eating Disorders Consortium\*
- The Emily Program\*
- WithAll\*

The \* denotes an EDC member organization.

If you would like to co-sponsor contact: [Kripa\\_Sreepada@smith.senate.gov](mailto:Kripa_Sreepada@smith.senate.gov) (Sen. Smith) or [Anna\\_Dietderich@murkowski.senate.gov](mailto:Anna_Dietderich@murkowski.senate.gov) (Sen. Murkowski)

