



April 21, 2021

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the House Health & Insurance Committee,

On behalf of the Colorado Community Health Network, or CCHN, I am writing in support of House Bill 21-1256: Delivering Health Care Services Through Telemedicine.

CCHN is the membership association for Colorado's 20 Federally Qualified Health Centers, also known as Community Health Centers (CHCs). Colorado's CHCs operate more than 220 clinic sites across the state and are the health care home to more than 852,000 Coloradans. Located in high-need urban and rural areas, CHCs provide high-quality and accessible primary care, including medical, behavioral, and oral health services to all patients regardless of insurance status or ability to pay. Fifty percent of CHC patients are covered through Health First Colorado, Colorado's Medicaid program.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Colorado's CHCs have played a critical role in responding to the virus, including providing testing, treatment, and vaccination services to some of the state's most vulnerable and underserved communities. CHCs have been on the frontlines of COVID-19, all while continuing to provide quality and accessible primary care to one in seven Coloradans.

The ability for CHCs to maintain their roles as comprehensive primary care providers throughout the pandemic has been due in large part to the accessibility and reimbursement of telemedicine services. From April to December 2020, an average of 33% of Colorado CHC visits were conducted via telemedicine. CCHN has worked in close partnership with the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) to ensure that Colorado's telemedicine regulations are in line with the needs of CHCs and their patients.

HB21-1256 would direct HCPF to establish rules for virtual-only health care providers that deliver health care services exclusively through telemedicine. CCHN and CHCs recognize the importance of a health care home for Medicaid patients to ensure continuity of care and patient choice and supports the Department's efforts to regulate virtual-only health care providers while working to ensure the sustainability of telemedicine for Medicaid providers and members.

On behalf of CCHN and Colorado's CHCs, I urge you to support HB21-1256.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Polly Anderson", is located below the "Thank you," text.

Polly Anderson  
Vice President of Strategy & Finance  
Colorado Community Health Network



## **POLICY STATEMENT**

**Colorado's LGBTQ+ community faces significant mental health and substance use disparities compared to the general population. Telemedicine services for behavioral health have grown substantially in the past year, and LGBTQ+ individuals may be dependent on virtual interactions for identity-affirming and non-discriminatory care. Envision:You strongly supports HB21-1256 to promulgate rules for telemedicine in Colorado and develop standards for telehealth care that will support the behavioral health needs of LGBTQ+ Coloradans.**

HB21-1256 Concerning the Promulgation of Rules by the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing as it Relates to Entities that Deliver Services Predominately through Telemedicine

House Bill 21-1256 requires the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing to develop and declare rules specifically for health care and mental health care services delivered primarily through telemedicine. The bill reiterates that in-person contact between a patient and a health care provider is not required for reimbursement under the state's medical assistance program, and any services provided through telemedicine must meet the same standards of care as in-person services.

### Why it Matters

The LGBTQ+ community in Colorado experiences significantly greater rates of behavioral health conditions, with three times the rates of depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, and suicidal ideation compared to the general population. Telehealth service delivery grew by over 4000% nationally from 2019 to 2020, with virtual mental health services accounting for the largest growth. Nationwide, an estimated 50% of individuals with a behavioral health condition accessed care remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. LGBTQ+ Coloradans face significant behavioral health disparities and may rely heavily on telehealth to receive needed mental health and substance use services.

LGBTQ+ individuals also face potential stigma and discrimination from health care providers due to identifying with a marginalized sexual orientation, gender expression, or gender identity. OneColorado found that 42% of LGBTQ+ Coloradans worry their healthcare provider is not supportive of LGBTQ+ people and 36% fear discrimination from their provider. Telehealth services surpass geographical restraints and can expand access to identity-affirming resources for LGBTQ+ individuals living in rural and mountain communities.

Envision:You strongly supports HB21-1256 to develop rules for telehealth service delivery in Colorado that will facilitate ongoing access to identity-affirming, non-discriminatory virtual health care services for LGBTQ+ Coloradans.

## Envision:You

The Envision:You mission is to support, educate and empower Colorado's LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning) community living with a mental health or substance use disorder. Furthermore, we work to inform the public—including elected officials and policymakers—about the disparities in care facing LGBTQ+ people. Finally, we support partners and allies to enhance training, research, education, and resources to assist LGBTQ+ people. To learn more please visit: [www.envision-you.org](http://www.envision-you.org).