



**Joint Proponent Written Testimony to the New Jersey Assembly Health Committee
Assembly Bill 4200 and Assembly Bill 4179 – Telehealth and Telemedicine Permanent Pay-Parity
Hearing: June 23, 2020**

The Medical Society of New Jersey (MSNJ) and the Association of Women in Rheumatology (AWIR) thank the Committee for the opportunity to submit joint written testimony to express our support for Assembly Bill 4200 and Assembly 4179, which establish permanent pay-parity requirements for telemedicine and telehealth health care services.

As a result of the state of emergency, public health emergency, and following the Department of Insurance's (DOI) issued guidance (Bulletin No. 20-07) on P.L.2020, C.3 and c.7, health carriers are currently required to provide coverage and reimburse providers for telemedicine and telehealth visits equally to in-person visits; this reimbursement arrangement is referred to as "pay-parity".

The current, established pay-parity has allowed medical providers and health care systems to deliver safe and efficient care to New Jersey patients during this unprecedented time. Our organizations hold that the need for telemedicine and telehealth services will still exist beyond the public health emergency. As such, we jointly support the intent of both A4200 and A4179, as pay-parity has served as a critical lifeline for providers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the MSNJ and AWIR respectfully requests that the pay-parity requirement currently in place for the duration of the emergency be made permanent.

Indeed, opportunities will still exist for the utilization of telemedicine and telehealth platforms beyond the emergency. In fact, many providers of health care have invested in new technologies to deliver virtual care and are continuing to do so at present. Patients and physicians alike have found the mode of delivery of health care via these platforms to be critical in maintaining continuity of care.

We applaud the sponsors of A4200 and A4179 for recognizing the importance of telemedicine and telehealth in care delivery. It is the MSNJ and AWIR's hope that health care providers will continue to be reimbursed at the same rate as in-person visits through the passage of this legislation. If pay-parity is not made permanent, we expect reimbursement rates to plummet to as low as thirty dollars (\$30) per visit. As you can imagine, providers of health care cannot sustain their practices at these extremely low rates.

Undoubtably, physicians and other providers have found telemedicine and telehealth to be beneficial to the sustained viability of practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is true for both private practices and hospital owned ones. We are certain that most outpatient physicians, specialists in the particular, will want to continue telemedicine and telehealth visits after the pandemic. Our membership is concerned that insurers and state programs will not continue to honor the current in-person fee schedule after the public health emergency ends without passage of this legislation.

Please support the provisions in A4200 and A4179 that make pay-parity permanent for services delivered to all New Jersey patients. The MSNJ and AWIR thank the Committee for the consideration of our request.

Medical Society of New Jersey
Association of Women in Rheumatology (*New Jersey Local Chapter*)