

July 3, 2019

Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Commissioner Carr and Colleagues,

As the Executive Medical Director of the Center for Telehealth at MUSC and the Director of the MUSC Telehealth Center of Excellence, we would like to express our enthusiastic support for the \$100 million *Connected Care Pilot Program*. As the leading academic health center in a state with a large low-income, rural and underserved population, MUSC applauds the Commission for the vision to enhance much-needed broadband-enabled telehealth services to improve access to high quality health care for rural and vulnerable populations.

MUSC's Center for Telehealth currently provides 77 unique telehealth services to over 275 care settings in 40 counties across the state including hospitals, primary care practices, community clinics, schools, and other sites, with 78% of sites being located in partially or fully medically underserved regions. The breadth, depth, and commitment to underserved and vulnerable populations led HRSA to designate MUSC as one of two Telehealth Centers of Excellence in 2017. Through this cooperative agreement with HRSA, the Center of Excellence seeks to advance the telehealth scientific knowledge base through rigorous evaluation of telehealth programs and dissemination of telehealth resources. The MUSC Center for Telehealth is also the administrative home of the South Carolina Telehealth Alliance (SCTA), a statewide collaboration of health care and other community organizations working together to expand telehealth services across the state.

We have seen firsthand through our telehealth initiatives the impact advanced broadband technology has on improving access in rural communities to efficient healthcare. Here are just a few examples:

- Our diabetic remote patient monitoring program, which relies on cellular broadband, now monitors over 600 patients on a monthly basis. Enrolled patients have seen an average A1c decrease of around 1.7%, equivalent to a drop in the average blood glucose of about 50mg/dL.
- Our telestroke program is now in nearly half of SC hospitals with quality and time-to-treatment metrics greatly exceeding national benchmarks with the most rapid improvement above these national standards occurring in rural communities. We are now exploring innovative ways to leverage EMS in our stroke network, an initiative which will lean heavily on mobile broadband connection in EMS vehicles.
- MUSC—in partnership with our state substance abuse system—has been using telehealth to address the opioid epidemic, training providers on the use of medication assisted treatment (MAT) and providing MAT to substance abuse and OB/GYN clinics via telehealth. Broadband access has been critical for the expansion of this program, and we are now exploring avenues to provide MAT care directly into a patient's home.

These are just a few examples how connected care is transforming healthcare in rural South Carolina. This access is resulting in better chronic disease management and long-term cost benefits in regards to health, money, productivity, and quality of life. The FCC's *Connected Care Pilot Program* will allow our Center and others around the country to build on these successes and to collect data that inform future policies that support the trend toward connected care.

Respectfully,



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