

To: Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee

**From: Scott Woods, Vice President Physician Network
AdventHealth Mid-America Region**

Date: February 9, 2021

RE: House Bill 2206

On behalf of AdventHealth Mid-America Region which includes AdventHealth Shawnee Mission, College Boulevard, Lenexa, Ottawa and South Overland Park, I submit the following testimony in support of the Kansas Hospital Association's amendments to **House Bill 2206 regarding telemedicine.**

AdventHealth Shawnee Mission quickly developed a robust virtual health care platform in response to the pandemic, and our patients readily adopted it, increasing access to the excellent care we provide. Beyond the pandemic, telehealth can improve health outcomes by reducing barriers some of our patients face.

We support KHA's amendment to ensure reimbursement and coverage makes virtual care financially sound. Without **payment parity** for telemedicine, health care providers could be forced to decrease telehealth options, limiting access to care. Reimbursement for virtual services should be on par with in-person care. Adequate reimbursement will also ensure we continue to maintain technologies that deliver the most secure and highest quality of care.

Social determinants of health, such as a lack of transportation, is a barrier to in-person appointments and staying compliant with prescription refills and treatment, leading to worse and more expensive health outcomes. Telehealth allows patients to miss less work for appointments. It is playing a role in combating the social determinants of health.

Health systems had been expanding telehealth before the pandemic, but we heavily invested this past year to quickly meet patient demand for high-quality virtual care and to improve health inequity. We encourage you to support KHA's amendment to allow our patients and providers to continue to use our **telehealth platform** and not force our patients and physicians to transfer to a new system.

AdventHealth delivers whole-person care – caring for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of our patients – virtually and in-person. AdventHealth Shawnee Mission has a large **Behavioral Health** Unit at our main hospital campus in Merriam. We take pride in the inpatient and outpatient mental health and addiction services we provide to our community.

When the pandemic began, mental health issues did not pause, and in many cases they escalated. For our patients, telehealth allowed direct access to therapists allowing patients to receive important care at the time of need, in the right setting.

We are proud to report that in March 2020, when campus visits to our Behavioral Health Intensive Outpatient program were suspended, we went live with virtual sessions **within 48 hours**. From March 23 to May 11 when patients and staff returned, we provided more than 700 telehealth sessions by our therapists and over 100 with our providers. Amazing stories came from our ability to quickly keep in touch and continue care for our patients who struggled with isolation and the stress of the pandemic.

Without the pressure of this pandemic, telehealth modernization would have taken years of advocacy. We are thankful for the flexibilities that have been in place during this public health emergency to allow us to efficiently deliver whole-person care and we support extending them beyond this public health crisis.

Thank you for considering the **Kansas Hospital Association's amendments to HB 2206**. I hope you will support these amendments which are priorities for AdventHealth.

Since 1962, AdventHealth Shawnee Mission has proudly served our community. We are the leading provider of health care in Johnson County with 3,500 employees.

Thank you for your service to our state.