



June 1, 2020

Office of Governor Doug Ducey
State Capitol
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Governor Ducey,

We the undersigned organizations, representing a variety of constituencies, urge you to build on the progress you have made toward making telehealth more accessible during this time of crisis by extending this technology to ocular services. Patients, underserved communities and taxpayers would all benefit from your timely action.

Arizona, along with the rest of the country, is facing a pandemic that has deeply affected how Arizonans live and work. Fortunately, your leadership during this crisis has helped citizens navigate the new normal. We applaud your efforts thus far, and we are especially appreciative of the executive orders that have increased flexibility in how Arizonans can access healthcare services.

As you know, telehealth services provide numerous advantages, especially in the current environment. Patients and consumers can obtain services they need in a convenient, affordable manner without leaving their homes and risking their health. Residents in underserved areas of the state can access care that they might otherwise do without or have to travel far to obtain. Taxpayers save in the long run on government employee insurance costs and other health program liabilities.¹

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended that people and providers delay routine medical services and shift to more telehealth services as a way to help flatten the COVID-19 curve.² This has meant that medical offices across the country—including in Arizona—have temporarily closed their doors or are difficult to visit for citizens abiding by social distancing recommendations.

¹ Pete Sepp, "NTU Submits Comments on the FTC's Updated Contact Lens Rule," National Taxpayers Union. July 30, 2019. <https://www.ntu.org/publications/detail/ntu-submits-comments-on-the-ftcs-updated-contact-lens-rule>

² "Outpatient and Ambulatory Care Settings: Responding to Community Transmission of COVID-19 in the United States." <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ambulatory-care-settings.html>

Fortunately, you have been on the forefront of allowing innovative telehealth services in states. Over the past couple months, you have issued executive orders that mandate insurance coverage of an expanded array of telehealth services and relax the requirement that a patient must see a provider in person before prescribing services can occur.³ Additionally, last year you signed into law a bill that added asynchronous telehealth methods to insurance coverage. This makes accessing healthcare services much easier, not only in times of crisis, but as we travel the road to economic recovery. To this end, we recommend implementing even greater access to telehealth services.

We ask that you consider urging legislators to act on expanding access to telehealth services millions of Americans currently use. Specifically, Arizonans are still unable to use online vendors to renew their eyeglass or contact lens prescriptions because these vendors use asynchronous store-and-forward technology instead of the real-time audio-video required under Arizona Revised Statutes Section 32-1401 Chapter 27 (tt). While this normally means that a patient in Arizona must visit her eye doctor for a prescription renewal, the pandemic has left many without the option of visiting an eye doctor in person. Maintaining a prescription to see clearly is crucial, as many Americans care for family members or worry about maintaining employment during the pandemic.

We ask that you consider expanding telehealth in Arizona to include store-and-forward vision care so that people can get the care they need in this time of emergency.

Sincerely,

National Taxpayers Union
R Street Institute
Citizen Outreach

³ Governor Doug Ducey, Executive Order: 2020-29 and Executive Order: 2020-15.
<https://azgovernor.gov/executive-orders>