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Carper, Blunt Rochester Highlight Telehealth Bill at Nemours duPont Pediatrics to Give Families Better Access to Healthcare

MILFORD, Del. (August 18, 2021) — U.S. Senator Tom Carper and U.S. Representative Lisa Blunt Rochester (both D-Del.) today joined patient providers and staff at Nemours duPont Pediatrics, Milford today to discuss their legislation, the Telehealth Improvement for Kids' Essential Services (TIKES) Act, which would help states expand telehealth options for low-income Americans, especially children. Carper and Blunt Rochester watched a telehealth demonstration showcasing remote otolaryngology care for a patient and discussed with patient providers how they are using telehealth to meet their patients' needs.

Telehealth increased substantially during the COVID-19 pandemic, and Nemours quickly scaled up their telehealth to accommodate a nearly 2,400 percent increase between February and April 2020. A recent survey by Nemours and Amwell found that almost two-thirds of parents (64 percent) said having video visits covered by insurance was "essential" or "extremely important" to their future use of telehealth, highlighting the importance of legislation to expand access for low-income Americans. Importantly, almost 90 percent of parents think telehealth visits would allow them to be equally or more involved in their child's healthcare compared with in-person care.

"Telehealth services have been a lifeline for so many Americans in this pandemic, as access to medical care from home has become so critical— but we know that there are still too many communities who have been left behind by this progress, said Carper. In particular, many lower-income families with children enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP face significant financial barriers that make this technology largely out of reach. This legislation would improve health outcomes and reduce costs by providing states with guidance to help fix this disparity, while helping the federal government learn more about telehealth's potential to expand health care options for lower-income Americans."

"The COVID-19 pandemic has allowed for us to make rapid progress on expanding access to telehealth so children and families across the country, especially those in rural and underserved communities, face fewer barriers to accessing medical care, said Rep. Blunt Rochester. With the introduction of the TIKES Act, we can continue that progress by bringing better alignment and clarity to Medicaid telehealth policies, as well as provide guidance to state Medicaid programs on the opportunities telehealth services can have for children."

"I commend Congresswoman Blunt Rochester and Senator Carper for their legislative leadership on telehealth and for partnering with Nemours on this important event. For Nemours and other health systems, telehealth continues to provide access to high-quality, efficient care to millions of American children. The public health challenge of COVID-19 highlighted its effectiveness and proved its value as a permanent part of the US healthcare system, said R. Lawrence Moss, MD, FACS, FAAP, President and CEO of Nemours Children's Health System.

"After more than a year fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important now than ever to achieve long-term solutions to reduce barriers to safe and reliable care via telehealth. Introduction of the TIKES Act is an important step forward, said Carey Officer, Vice President of Service Delivery Innovation at Nemours Center for Health Delivery Innovation (CHDI).

The TIKES Act would provide guidance and strategies to states on how to effectively integrate telehealth into their Medicaid and CHIP programs and take a comprehensive look at how telehealth impacts health care access, utilization, cost, and outcomes. Furthermore, the bill promotes greater coordination among federal agency telehealth programs and policies for more efficient use of resources.

Specifically, the TIKES Act will:

- Provide states with guidance and strategies to increase telehealth access for Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) populations
- Require a GAO study examining data and information on the impact of telehealth on the Medicaid population
- Require a GAO study reviewing coordination among federal agency telehealth policies and examine opportunities for better collaboration, as well as opportunities for telehealth expansion into early care and education settings

More information on the Senate version of the TIKES Act can be foundhere, along with more information of the House version here.

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Eds: Photos and video is available. Please contact Katie_grasso@carper.senate.gov

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Additional assets available online: **Photos** (1)

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