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## SENATE RESOLUTION

URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO PERFORM A FEASIBILITY STUDY OF THE BENEFITS OF AUTHORIZING REIMBURSEMENT FOR SERVICES PROVIDED THROUGH TELEHEALTH BY WAY OF AUDIO-ONLY TELEPHONIC COMMUNICATION.

1           WHEREAS, telehealth has served as a lifeline of access to  
2 essential health care services for residents with adequate  
3 broadband coverage and offers an affordable, convenient option  
4 for patients; and

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6           WHEREAS, however, many Hawaii residents who live in rural  
7 and underprivileged communities are often cut off from receiving  
8 essential health care through telehealth because they lack the  
9 broadband coverage necessary to access this care; and

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11           WHEREAS, furthermore, elderly residents and others who may  
12 have limited digital literacy may have difficulties accessing  
13 telehealth services through the Internet; and

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15           WHEREAS, the use of standard telephone contact in  
16 telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the  
17 effectiveness of this tool as a mode of essential health care  
18 delivery, especially for residents living in rural, isolated,  
19 and underprivileged communities; and

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21           WHEREAS, medical professionals have used standard telephone  
22 contacts for decades to provide necessary access to primary care  
23 when a patient is homebound or otherwise unable to access in-  
24 person or face-to-face care; and

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26           WHEREAS, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services  
27 continues to authorize coverage of audio-only (telephone)  
28 telehealth services used in the treatment of mental health and  
29 substance abuse in certain circumstances, allowing federally  
30 qualified health centers and rural health clinics to use  
31 telehealth to care for patients in patients' homes; and



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WHEREAS, it is important to ensure equitable access to telephonic and telehealth services for patients who are covered by private insurance with those who are covered by managed care plans; and

WHEREAS, developing a provider reimbursement system that also incorporates reimbursement for telephonic services, including audio-only communication, would increase access to and encourage greater utilization of mental health services through telephonic telehealth; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-second Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2023, that the Department of Health is urged to perform a feasibility study of the benefits of authorizing reimbursement for services provided through telehealth by way of audio-only telephonic communication; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Health is urged to report to the Legislature with the results of its feasibility study, including any proposed legislation, no later than twenty days prior to the Regular Session of 2024; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Health.

OFFERED BY:  \_\_\_\_\_