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**Statement by Lora Pellegrini, President and CEO of the Massachusetts Association of Health Plans,
on *An Act Putting Patients First*
June 18, 2020**

We applaud the Senate for their work to address important health care issues that impact consumers, including surprise billing and scope of practice. Eliminating the unfair practice of surprise billing and allowing providers to practice at the top of their license through scope of practice provisions will help control health care costs while expanding access to care. By requiring that health plans pay reasonable reimbursement rates for out-of-network services and prohibiting providers from balance billing, the Senate has ensured essential protections for consumers. Similarly, expanding the scope of practice for licensed health care providers will provide consumers broader access to treatment at a greater cost savings.

The Senate bill also seeks to expand health plan coverage of telehealth services by requiring telehealth reimbursement at the same rate as an in-person visit for a period of 24 months. MAHP and our member plans are strong supporters of telehealth for the members and employers we serve. Telehealth has been an important tool to ensure members have continued access to provider services during closures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, but we must build on its promise of providing cost-savings for employers and consumers in the future.

Moving forward, it is vital that the state thoughtfully monitor the provision of in-person care and telehealth coverage to determine when we can remove statutorily mandated payments in order to build on telehealth's promise of providing cost-savings for employers and consumers, ensuring access to high-quality care for members that improves their patient experience and is appropriate for delivery via telehealth technologies.

As businesses large and small, individuals, and families struggle financially through this pandemic, it is paramount that we collectively work to make health care more affordable. We look forward to continuing to work with the Senate on this important legislation.

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