

34th National Black Nurses Day on Capitol Hill
Theme: Health Equity, Nursing Resilience, and Innovations:
NBNA's New Call to Action

Inequities in Broadband Telemedicine and Telehealth

The National Black Nurses Association (NBNA) supports comprehensive efforts to endorse action to address the inequities in broadband telemedicine and telehealth. NBNA calls on the 117th Congress to also support programs and services to promote broadband access among Black and other communities of color that do not have the same level of access as other communities.

Background:

- Residential segregation has been associated with worse educational quality, health behaviors, environmental exposures, and cardio-metabolic disease, all of which may contribute to cognitive and brain aging.
- Broadband gaps also exist predominantly in rural areas and in the elderly population.
- 9 million children live in homes lacking a broadband connection, and white residents are more likely to have broadband in their homes than compared to people of color.
- 1 in 4 households in the United States still lack access to fixed broadband service at threshold speeds.
- COVID-19 has brought on a critical shift to telehealth services, but access to these services is not equally distributed.
- Racially and economically segregated neighborhoods tend to experience lower levels of broadband services.
- Telehealth services can now provide access to specialty services that previously might not have been available. A lack of access to these services due to technology and broadband barriers has been given a new label: a “super-determinant of health.” Older adults and those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged stand to feel the greatest burden of this divide.

Recommendations to Legislators:

NBNA calls upon the 117th Congress to:

- Reintroduce and support legislation like H.R.6474, “**Healthcare Broadband Expansion During COVID-19 Act**”, to better provide access to care for vulnerable groups.
- Reintroduce and support legislation like H.R. 8650, “**Eliminate the Digital Divide Act**”, to provide for a comprehensive plan to eliminate the digital divide.
- Support legislation such as HR 7302, “**Accessible, Affordable Internet for All Act**”, which would make high-speed broadband internet service accessible and affordable to all Americans. The bill was introduced during the last congressional session.
- Reintroduce and support S. 4789, “**Eliminate the Digital Divide Act of 2020**”, which would amend the Communications Act of 1934 to provide funding to states to extend broadband service to unserved areas in partnership with broadband service providers, and for other purposes.

References

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