

United States Senate

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 9, 2014

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Thune, Enzi Applaud Federation of State Medical Boards Proposal to Advance Telemedicine

*Efforts to create a multistate physician licensure compact would remove barriers
that impede the advancement of telehealth*

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Senator John Thune (R-S.D.) and Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.) today led a bipartisan group of 14 senators in sending a letter to the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB), the association representing over 70 medical and osteopathic boards, applauding their efforts in advancing solutions toward allowing doctors to practice medicine across state lines, which will better facilitate the use of telemedicine.

Thune and Enzi, along with seven other bipartisan senators, spearheaded an initial letter in March of 2013 to the FSMB encouraging them to begin development of a comprehensive system that would allow states to retain control of medical licensure and ensure the safety of patients while allowing physicians portability of their license to practice outside of their licensing state in an effort to support the advancement of telehealth.

Recently, the FSMB and a drafting committee of the Interstate Compact Taskforce have begun to work out key details of a new option for medical licensing that would speed up the process of issuing licenses for physicians who wish to practice in multiple states. This interstate compact system is expected to significantly decrease the number of barriers to the process of gaining licensure in multiple states and helping facilitate licensure portability and telemedicine, while increasing access to health care, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

“In South Dakota, telehealth makes it easier for physicians to see patients that may not be able to easily or frequently travel to where the physician practices,” said Thune. “However, without a way to more efficiently license physicians across state lines, telehealth advancement is hindered. The development of this drafting committee and the progress they have already made is an important first step.”

“Folks in my home state of Wyoming often have to travel long distances to see a doctor, but telemedicine can bring the care they need right to their homes,” said Enzi. “Telemedicine has the ability to help expand access to care for rural states and communities and I applaud the progress being made to ensure that this is a viable and safe option for families and physicians alike.”

Signers of the letter include: John Thune (R-S.D.), Michael Enzi (R-Wyo.), Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), John Boozman (R-Ark.), Tom Carper (D-Del.), Tom Coburn (R-Okla.), Thad Cochran (R-Miss.), Al Franken (D-Minn.), James Inhofe

(R-Okla.), Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.), Tim Johnson (D-S.D.), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), John D. Rockefeller IV (D-W.Va.), and Mark Warner (D-Va.).

The text of the letter is below:

January 9, 2014

Humayun Chaudhry, DO, FACP
President and CEO
Federation of State Medical Boards
400 Fuller Wisser Road, Suite 300
Euless, TX 76039

Jon Thomas, MD, MBA
Chairman of the Board of Directors
Federation of State Medical Boards
400 Fuller Wisser Road, Suite 300
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Dear Dr. Chaudhry and Dr. Thomas,

We write to congratulate you on the efforts the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) and its member medical boards have made on advancing solutions towards multistate practice through more efficient sharing of medical licensure information. The advancement of telehealth technology as a tool to facilitate access to care is contingent upon streamlining the licensing process for highly qualified physicians seeking to practice in multiple jurisdictions.

FSMB and the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact Taskforce have made important progress. We support changes to improve the process for physicians to submit the necessary information and obtain the required credentials to practice via telehealth in multiple states. The representatives from state medical boards and experts in compact formation on the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact Taskforce have expended many hours of effort to form a solution that will provide an avenue for the advancement of telehealth.

FSMB's appointment of a drafting team to use eight key consensus principles to shape a voluntary licensure compact is welcome progress to ensure timely decisions. As you continue this development process, we would like to express our support for an interstate compact to provide a solution to expedite the process whereby physicians can be licensed in multiple states and practice telemedicine in a safe and accountable manner.

Like you, we are committed to the advancement of telehealth technology in a way that preserves states' ability to regulate medicine within their borders and protect their patients. We agree that allowing states to share information while allowing each state to retain jurisdiction over physicians who choose to practice in the state is in the best interest of both physicians and patients.

Please keep us apprised of the progress FSMB makes to advance physicians' ability to be licensed to practice in multiple states via telemedicine.

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