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## **Thune Introduces Bipartisan Bill to Improve Rural Health Care**

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Senator John Thune today reintroduced the Fostering Independence Through Technology (FITT) Act, which would expand the use of telehealth technology under Medicare in rural and other underserved communities across the nation. The FITT Act would create a pilot program to provide incentives for home health agencies across the country to use home monitoring and communications technologies, giving seniors and other Medicare beneficiaries greater access to the care they need and the ability to stay in their homes. Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) joined Senator Thune in reintroducing this measure.

“Telehealth technology has the ability to dramatically change the way people in rural areas access high-quality health care,” said Thune. “Many South Dakotans know the hardship and cost associated with traveling long distances to see specialists and to visit specialized medical facilities. Telehealth technology can help bridge the physical gap between patients and doctors.

“Telehealth technology also has the capability to significantly reduce the cost of providing care in rural areas, which is something that all Members of Congress should support.”

Senator Thune’s bipartisan bill has the support of several prominent telehealth and home health advocates in South Dakota and beyond.

“The Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society strongly supports and appreciates the telehealth legislation introduced by Senators Thune and Klobuchar,” said Dave Horzadovsky, President and CEO of the Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society, which is headquartered in Sioux Falls. “For more than 85 years, the Society has provided health care in many rural and urban settings across the United States. This legislation will help health care providers such as the Society develop new, innovative ways to reach out and offer supportive services directly in clients’ homes.”

“The FITT Act champions the best of modern health care; it will improve the delivery of health care to underserved rural areas and urban seniors, employ the expertise of home health care providers, and provide Medicare with savings generated from the use of telehealth,” added Val J. Halamandaris,

President of the National Association for Home Care and Hospice. “We applaud Senators Thune and Klobuchar for sponsoring this important legislation.”

Under Senator Thune’s legislation, home health agencies participating in the pilot program will receive annual incentive payments based on a percentage of the Medicare savings achieved as a result of telehealth services.