WellSpace Health Rapidly Develops Telehealth Services Amid COVID-19 to Serve Vulnerable Populations

New digital infrastructure funded by regional partners working to open up critical access to Sacramento's Medi-Cal populations

Sacramento, CA – As COVID-19 continues to impact access to quality health care in the Sacramento region and beyond, WellSpace Health today announced the rapid expansion and success of its newly established telehealth services. The program, which was made possible by support received from statewide partners – including a $100,000 grant from Health Net, LLC. – is working to breakdown existing and new barriers to access by offering video visits and phone consultations for the nearly 100,000 patients WellSpace serves.

WellSpace's patients represent some of the most vulnerable and underserved populations throughout Sacramento, Placer and Amador counties. The rapid integration of telehealth services into operations during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is helping to ensure these patients are able to maintain access to vital care throughout the health crisis.

In order to meet patients' needs, WellSpace mobilized grants and support from statewide partners, like Health Net, to build its telehealth program up in a matter of weeks. The program is now safely serving 2,000 to 3,000 patients a week through telehealth visits.

"The support from our partners, like Health Net, provided us the ability to rapidly expand our services to include a telehealth program that is bridging the gap to high quality, regional care for our patients during the COVID-19 pandemic," said **Dr. Jonathan Porteus, CEO of WellSpace Health**. "Our telehealth program gives our community health centers the tools they need to reach the people we serve safely and effectively amid social distancing guidelines."

"WellSpace Health believes that everyone deserves to be seen and in the age of COVID-19, that means adapting our services to ensure our patients are not forced out of care by quarantine recommendations. This is especially important for people of color, who we already know are more likely to die during COVID-19, to provide appropriate access to care from their home," added **Dr. Porteus**.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed how patients and providers engage in health care delivery. Now more than ever, we need to meet patients where they are at - and telehealth has proven to be a critical tool in doing just that" **said Congresswoman Doris Matsui (CA-06).** "In Sacramento, I am proud of innovative leaders like WellSpace Health who have been working hard to expand telehealth to make sure patients have safe, reliable access to the care they need. As we continue to meet the challenges of this crisis, support from partners like Health Net to help providers scale forward-thinking telehealth programs should continue to be a top priority."

Health Net is the largest and most-experienced Medi-Cal plan in California. In May 2020, Health Net announced it awarded 138 grants, totaling $13.4 million, to support the establishment and

expansion of telehealth and telephonic services for California providers serving Medi-Cal members. This was the largest grant of cash dedicated to this cause by a health plan in California at the time.

"Resources like telehealth that lower barriers to accessing care for our communities are crucial to keeping Californians healthy throughout this pandemic," **said Brian Ternan, President and CEO of Health Net of California and California Health and Wellness.** "Supporting regional providers like WellSpace, who care for some of our state's most vulnerable communities is central to Health Net's purpose. We are proud to provide them with the tools needed to build resources like telehealth services that help increase access for those who need it most."

About WellSpace Health:
WellSpace Health is a non-profit Federally Qualified Health Center system that provides high quality medical, dental, behavioral health, and supportive services to more than 100,000 patients at 31 centers in Sacramento, Placer, and Amador counties. WellSpace Health is accredited by The Joint Commission for Ambulatory Care and Behavioral Health and certified as a Patient Centered Health Home and a Behavioral Health Home.