Digital inequities extend beyond health care access

Updated September 8, 2022, 2:30 a.m.

Dr. Chris Garofalo, a member of the Massachusetts Medical Society, in North Attleborough on a telehealth session with a patient in April. JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

Dr. Katherine Gergen Barnett's op-ed "The digital divide will grow when Medicare ends some telehealth benefits" (Opinion, Sept. 1) points to the potential of telehealth that became apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic and notes how, ironically, that potential is threatened by the ongoing recovery. As COVID-related attention and resources fade, it is incumbent on policy makers, advocates, and community leaders to find sustainable ways to expand digital equity efforts that advance not only health care equity but also education equity, economic opportunity, and the well-being of our communities overall.

The gaps in digital access exposed by the pandemic are rooted in historic underinvestment and marginalization. Despite the increased focus on digital equity over the past two and a half years, hundreds of thousands of households in Massachusetts — disproportionately BIPOC, low-income, immigrants, and seniors — are still without reliable, high-quality Internet, adequate digital devices, or the resources and support to use digital tools effectively.

Gergen Barnett writes, "Rapid pace innovations often require the slower build of infrastructures to sustain them." She's right, and it goes beyond telehealth. Expanding opportunity, making public systems more inclusive, and strengthening communities through digital access requires sustained investments that address the root causes of digital inequity.

Marvin Venay

Chief advocacy officer

Tech Goes Home

Boston

Tech Goes Home is a nonprofit working to expand digital equity throughout Massachusetts.

💬 Show comments