

Written Testimony by Jennifer Ruschman
to the House Finance Committee
in Support of Telemedicine Reimbursement Policy
included in Sub-HB 49, Main Operating Budget
Thursday, April 27 2017

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan and Ranking Member Cera my name is Jennifer Ruschman and I am the Director of Telehealth I currently work at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. I am writing to emphasize my support for the coverage of telemedicine services language included in the substitute version of HB 49 the FY18-19 budget.

Telemedicine, a key innovation in support of health care delivery reform, is being used in initiatives to improve access to care, care coordination and quality, as well as reduce the rate of growth in health care spending. These initiatives are essential as we adopt new models of care to reduce health care spending, increase access to services, and provide high quality care. These services are important for all patients to have access to, not just those that live in rural areas or who are covered by Medicaid.

The state of Ohio is currently behind 30 other states who have passed laws providing reimbursement for telemedicine services. Those states have payment parity between telemedicine services and in-office services for both private and government payers. The language included in sub-HB 49 aligns Ohio with these other states by requiring a health benefit plan to cover telemedicine services on the same basis and to the same extent that the plan covers in-person health services. It also prohibits a health benefit plan from imposing any annual or lifetime benefit for telemedicine services other than a benefit maximum imposed on all benefits offered under then plan. In addition, the bill will prohibit a health benefit plan from excluding coverage for a service solely because it is a telemedicine service.

We must provide opportunities for telemedicine reimbursement if we want to see the potential growth opportunities that telemedicine services can provide. Currently this is a barrier to our state health care organizations to compete with innovative organizations in other states with payment parity. With this language inclusion, physicians in Ohio will have more avenues to provide access to patients, coordinate care, and improve health outcomes. We will also have more avenues to innovate and be leaders nationally in developing and delivering health care.

Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center applauds your efforts to ensure that telemedicine in Ohio can be fully utilized and barriers to access to care are removed.

