



Collaborating to  
Ensure a Healthy Ohio

May 10, 2018

The Honorable Stephen Huffman  
Chairman, Ohio House Health Committee  
Ohio House of Representatives  
77 S. High Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: Ohio Hospital Association support for H.B. 546

Dear Representative Huffman:

The Ohio Hospital Association represents 233 hospitals and health systems across the state and we appreciate the opportunity to support H.B. 546. This legislation would prohibit health benefit plans from treating telemedicine differently from in-person health care services solely because they are provided as telemedicine services.

Through telehealth services, Ohio hospitals have provided patients with increased access to care, lowered costs, improved patient satisfaction and, most importantly, improved clinical outcomes. This legislation will allow hospitals to build upon these achievements by ensuring more Ohioans have coverage for these important services.

The Ohio Hospital Association's Telehealth Work Group has defined and collected information related to key metrics in order to provide a concise data set to policymakers that shows the efficacy and value of telehealth. Through this work, we know that Ohio hospitals are investing in programs that show clear benefit to patients, including telestroke, remote patient monitoring, urgent care, pediatrics, and telepsychology.

Within each of these areas—and more—examples of telehealth's radical success are numerous, and include:

- Ohio hospitals have increased access to specialty services and allowed patients to heal in their homes using telehealth technology.
- Patients in areas of the state with a shortage of child psychologists have had unprecedented access to these services.
- Rural hospitals have been able to completely change the way they treat stroke patients—faster and better—through linking telestroke hub and spoke hospitals.
- Ohioans suffering from opiate use and addiction can access needed behavioral health services remotely.
- Cost savings have been achieved, as patients receive care in less costly settings, receive care sooner to avoid more costly care when conditions worsen, and allows all parties to recognize cost savings related to avoidance of unnecessary transfers and travel.

However, there are currently barriers to fully leveraging telehealth in Ohio. The problem is not the willingness and innovation of health care providers, but rather it is a problem of providers receiving adequate reimbursement to maintain the services they provide, expand access, and continue to innovate.

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While 35 states currently have some level of parity legislation for private payers, Ohio is not one of those states. As a result, patients are often unable to access the most appropriate and cost-effective treatment options. It is also important to note that this bill does not require parity in payment, just parity in coverage options. Health plans will still be able to negotiate rates for services directly with providers.

Telehealth offers the potential to improve the efficiency, convenience, and cost-effectiveness of our health care system, and this legislation is an important step forward for Ohio patients. We appreciate the opportunity to voice our support and look forward to working together on this issue. Please let us know if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S. Gilligan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and a long, sweeping underline.

Stephanie Gilligan  
Director of Advocacy