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Columbus, Ohio 43215

ohiohealth.com
May 16, 2018

The Honorable Stephen Huffman
Ohio House of Representatives
77 S. High Street, 12th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chair Huffman,

On behalf of OhioHealth, I ask for your support of HB 546, legislation that would require a health benefit plan to provide coverage for telemedicine services on the same basis and to the same extent as in-person services.

I currently serve as the System Medical Chief for Behavioral Health at OhioHealth, a large hospital system serving the community since 1891. OhioHealth is a family of 28,000 associates, physicians and volunteers, and a network of 11 hospitals, over 50 ambulatory sites, hospice, home-health, medical equipment and other health services spanning a 47-county area throughout Ohio.

OhioHealth continues to invest in behavioral services and meeting the needs of the communities we serve. Telemedicine capabilities are a rapidly expanding and useful tool at our disposal. Below are a few examples of how we employ telemedicine in the behavioral health space:

- Many of our primary care clinics are now integrating comprehensive behavioral health screenings into a patient's initial primary care visit. If a diagnosis is made, we are able to connect the patient to an appropriate provider via telehealth capabilities.
- Many of our busier hospital-based emergency departments will triage a patient who presents in a state of crisis and immediately connect that patient to a psychiatrist at Riverside Methodist Hospital for a virtual consultation.
- OhioHealth supports the student health center on campus at Ohio Wesleyan University (OWU), and one day each week we have a psychiatric nurse practitioner available to provide a virtual consultation to OWU students needing mental health care.
- Our Employer Services division offers clinical care to large organizations, such as Huntington; we have the ability to provide virtual consultations to associates at these organizations, giving them the opportunity to receive mental health services during the work day, without having to leave the office.

A FAITH-BASED, NOT-FOR-PROFIT HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

RIVERSIDE METHODIST HOSPITAL + GRANT MEDICAL CENTER + DOCTORS HOSPITAL + GRADY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
DUBLIN METHODIST HOSPITAL + DOCTORS HOSPITAL-NELSONVILLE + HARDIN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
MARION GENERAL HOSPITAL + REHABILITATION HOSPITAL + O'BLENESS HOSPITAL + MEDCENTRAL MANSFIELD HOSPITAL
MEDCENTRAL SHELBY HOSPITAL + WESTERVILLE MEDICAL CAMPUS + HEALTH AND SURGERY CENTERS + PRIMARY AND SPECIALTY CARE
URGENT CARE + WELLNESS + HOSPICE + HOME CARE + 28,000 PHYSICIANS, ASSOCIATES & VOLUNTEERS

According to the American Telemedicine Association, 35 states currently have some level of telemedicine parity legislation for private payers. Ohio is not one of those states. All of the examples cited above will reduce overall costs for behavioral health services, so HB 546 has the potential to save the healthcare system money in the long run.

We are keenly vested in ensuring the best health outcomes for all of the patients we serve. Thank you for your consideration of this important health care issue. I ask that you support HB 546.

Regards,

Dallas Erdmann, M.D.

Cc: Members of the House Health Committee