

Written Testimony by Anita Somani, MD and Robert Falcone, MD
to the Senate Finance Health and Medicaid Sub-Committee
in Support of Telemedicine Reimbursement Policy
included in Sub-HB 49, Main Operating Budget
Wednesday, May 24th 2017

Chairman Hackett and members of the Senate Finance Health and Medicaid Sub-Committee, Anita Somani, MD, the President of the Columbus Medical Association, and Robert Falcone, MD, the CEO of the CMA, are submitting this joint testimony in support of the coverage of telemedicine services language included in the House passed 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 offer a promising avenue to expand service delivery for primary care providers and decrease economic barriers to accessing primary care, particularly for patients who find travel difficult, institutionalized patients, and patients that live in medically underserved areas.

The state of Ohio is currently behind 30 other states who have passed laws providing reimbursement for telemedicine services. The language included in sub-HB 49 aligns Ohio with 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. With this language, physicians in Ohio will have more avenues to provide access to patients, coordinate care, and improve health outcomes.

The Columbus Medical Association applauds the efforts of the House to include this language and we ask the Senate to keep the language in the bill. Your efforts will ensure that telemedicine in Ohio can be fully utilized and barriers to access to care are removed.