



Dave Dillahunt, Executive Director
Ohio Hematology Oncology Society
Senate Finance Health and Medicaid Sub-Committee
Support of Telemedicine Reimbursement Policy
Sub-HB 49
Wednesday, May 24th 2017

Chairman Hackett, Vice-Chair Tavares, Members of the Senate Finance Health & Medicaid Sub-Committee. My name is Dave Dillahunt and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Hematology Oncology Society. The Society represents oncologists and hematologists in Ohio who treat cancer patients in the community setting. Community oncology practices treat the majority of patients facing cancer. Our members are located in rural, suburban and urban settings. Practices range in size from 1 to 36 physicians, with most being in the 3-4 physician range. I am writing to emphasize the Society's support for 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 and decrease economic barriers to accessing care, particularly for patients who find travel difficult or live in medically underserved areas. Oncology continues to experience uneven geographic distribution of its workforce. For the more than 59 million Americans living in rural areas, a diagnosis of cancer can present unique challenges to obtaining high-quality care for their disease, including long travel distances and decreased access to specialists, and state-of-the-art diagnostics, treatments and technologies.

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 Ohio Hematology Oncology Society appreciates 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.

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