

House Bill 679 – Proponent Testimony
Cleveland Clinic
The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center
UC Health
June 9, 2020

Chairman Brinkman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Boggs, and members of the House Insurance Committee, thank you for the opportunity today to testify in support of HB 679. We greatly appreciate your willingness to work with hospital partners on crafting legislation surrounding the critical issue of telehealth.

Cleveland Clinic, The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, and UC Health have long advocated on the importance of telehealth and the need to bring policy up-to-date to keep pace with this growing technology. Through the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen a substantial increase in the utilization of telehealth services, greatly benefiting many Ohioans who are shifting to virtual visits.

Telehealth visits allow providers to meet patients where they are. It also allows providers to work with patients in rural areas where access issues persist, and where providers are limited. Expanding access to care in this way is especially important when we take a look at specialties that are in high demand such as psychiatry and mental health providers. Another great example where this is useful is in the case of stroke experts, who every day connect into Emergency Rooms within minutes using telemedicine, what previously would have taken far more time, to save lives.

We are especially encouraged to see that coverage parity is protected in House Bill 679. This telehealth coverage parity language is critical as it helps ensure increased access to care for patients, the potential of reduced costs to our health care system, and improved overall health outcomes.

Ohio is fortunate to have some of the best health care in the nation, and in order to best support these institutions and providers we need to ensure they can innovate through the best technologies available.

Thus, we are encouraged by the aim of this legislation to expand the types of providers who can utilize telehealth, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to add additional providers who can effectively serve patients virtually and increase access to needed care.

We are grateful that this legislation provides enough flexibility in the law to accommodate both current telehealth applications and those made possible through developments in the technology. How we codify telehealth law now should embrace current technology and provider types and allow for the growth in technology and providers in years to come.

As the health care industry continues to transform, we will be providing more complex care through telehealth. We can provide remote monitoring of patients with diabetes and the medical supplies they need are covered. As remote patient monitoring continues to increase, we request that the cost of the digital monitoring devices or equipment be covered by all payer types as well.

Last, we support language ensuring all telehealth visits meet the appropriate standard of care. Clinicians are in the best position to determine whether and how often they need to examine a patient in person in order to meet the applicable standard of care, and when a telehealth visit does meet that standard.

We appreciate the opportunity to partner with you on this legislation, and support the passage of this legislation. As leading health systems in Ohio, we thank you for your efforts to increase access to telehealth, making for more affordable healthcare for patients and providers alike.