



SENATE INSURANCE & FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE – Proponent
Testimony, House Bill 679, Wednesday, November 18, 2020

Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Hottinger, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Jeff Dillon, Ohio Legislative Director for Americans for Prosperity.

On behalf of Americans for Prosperity (AFP) activists in Ohio, I am here to testify in support of House Bill 679. AFP activists engage friends and neighbors on key issues and advocate on a variety of issues, including building a patient-centered health care system that lowers costs, increase choices, and improves access for millions of people seeking relief. The reforms outlined in HB 679 to expand access to telehealth would promote all these important goals.

Over the past several months, telehealth has played an important role helping health care providers controlling the spread of COVID-19, largely thanks to emergency reforms implemented by Governor Mike DeWine. These temporary measures have empowered hospitals to virtually consult and screen patients, remotely monitor patients' conditions, and remotely advise distant facilities who lack in-person expertise to treat patients with COVID. As a result of these changes, health care groups have increased the number of telehealth visits they deliver in Ohio by up to 22,000 percent.ⁱ

Unfortunately, this dramatic expansion of telehealth is dependent on temporary reforms that are limited to the duration of the COVID-19 public health emergency declaration. Absent additional action from lawmakers, patients will lose access to many of the telehealth services they rely on when the emergency declaration ends.

House Bill 679 would ensure Ohioans can continue to access lifesaving virtual care long after this pandemic is over. This proposal would permanently authorize all health care providers regulated by the state's licensing boards to deliver telehealth. Prior to COVID-19, only physicians, physicians assistants, and advance practice registered nurses could deliver telehealth.ⁱⁱ

Furthermore, this bill would allow health professionals to deliver virtual care through a wider array of telehealth technologies. Before the current public health crisis, providers were restricted to delivering virtual care through a real-time video consultation. HB 679 would end these limitations and offer providers the option to consult patients over the phone. In addition, the bill would authorize providers to use remote monitoring devices to observe patients' health conditions from the comfort of their homes.

These reforms will dramatically improve patient health and lower the cost of medical care. Within the Veterans Health Administrations, remote patient monitoring programs reduced hospital visits by 20 percent for patients with diabetes and 30 percent for patients with heart failure. This translated into \$6,500 in savings per patient and \$1 billion in total savings for taxpayers.ⁱⁱⁱ

This committee can ensure more families receive the health care they need by empowering Ohio's health care professionals to deliver virtual care. Please vote "Yes" on HB 679 in committee to strengthen health care access, lower costs, and expedite the end of Ohio's COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you again, Chairman, for the opportunity to offer testimony today, and I'm happy to answer any questions at this time.

ⁱ <https://www.dispatch.com/news/20200528/rebuilding-america-telemedicine-use-prompted-by-covid-19-here-to-stay-doctors-and-health-care-officials-say>

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[http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/3902.30#:~:text=\(1\)%20A%20health%20benefit%20plan,in%2Dperson%20health%20care%20services.](http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/3902.30#:~:text=(1)%20A%20health%20benefit%20plan,in%2Dperson%20health%20care%20services.)

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