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Columbus Urban League
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Community Housing Network
CompDrug/Youth to Youth
Concord Counseling Services
Directions for Youth & Families (DFYF)
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House of Hope, Inc.
Huckleberry House
LifeTown-Friendship Circle
LSS CHOICES for Victims of Domestic Violence
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Netcare Access
North Central Mental Health Services
North Community Counseling Centers
OhioGuidestone
PrimaryOne Health
Southeast Healthcare
St. Vincent Family Center
Syntero
The Buckeye Ranch
The Heritage of Hannah Neil
The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center
The P.E.E.R. Center
The Village Network
Twin Valley Behavioral Healthcare (TVBH)
Urban Minority Alcoholism & Drug Abuse Outreach Program of Franklin County, Inc. (UMADAOPFC)



November 30, 2021

Honorable Bob D. Hackett
Ohio Senate District 10
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square, 1st Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Senator Hackett,

The Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Board (ADAMH) of Franklin County supports the requirement that health insurers cover telemedicine during an emergency and is pleased to be able to provide this written testimony in support of Senate Bill 305.

ADAMH funds a network of 33 agencies in Franklin County, providing mental health and addiction services to some of the most vulnerable in our community. Our providers are finding telemedicine, or telehealth, is essential during COVID – allowing them to remain open and accessible when in-person access is not an option. This virtual connection to services during an emergency is particularly important to people in recovery, for whom social isolation can be one of the greatest threats to their wellbeing.

We know from our providers that telehealth services decrease no-show rates for appointments, meaning more people are accessing the care they need. Telehealth's use for behavioral health services meets people where they are, removes transportation and childcare barriers and people keep their appointments. It also helps with stigma reduction, allowing people to seek the care they need in the privacy of their own home.

Telemedicine also expands access to care in a way that is efficient and cost effective to deliver. However, it is only as good as patient's access to technology. As the state of Ohio considers additional requirements for insurers to cover telehealth services, there must be a way to ensure access to personal technology – particularly for traditionally underserved populations. Not everyone has access cell phone and not everyone has access to video, even if they have a cell phone.

If telemedicine is to reach its full potential, the availability of personal technology must be addressed along with improvements in insurance coverage – whether as part of an emergency response or as an integrated ongoing part of behavioral healthcare delivery.

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Where Better Begins

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As this pandemic continues to impact our communities, the need for mental health and addiction services have never been greater. We should do all we can to ensure greater accessibility and coverage of these vital services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erika Clark Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Erika Clark Jones
CEO, ADAMH