

House Insurance Committee
House Bill 122 (Fraizer, Holmes)
Written Testimony of Steve Province, FACHE
President & CEO, Buckeye Health Plan
February 25, 2021

Chairman Brinkman, Ranking Member Miranda and members of the House Insurance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share with you today Buckeye Health Plan's thoughts on HB 122, regarding telehealth services.

During recent testimony on the state budget bill (HB 110), Department of Medicaid Director Maureen Corcoran called the enhanced use of telehealth the "silver lining" in the terrible COVID-19 pandemic. We agree. We have seen the shift to a telehealth experience vastly increase member compliance with appointments and ease providers' ability to serve our members. Telehealth has been particularly beneficial for members needing behavioral health services and in rural areas. We have processed more than 26,000 telehealth claims to date. We are excited that with HB 122, the advancements in this area will continue well beyond the end of this pandemic, providing another option for our members to receive services and care coordination from our network of 40,000+ providers.

Members should not face excessive barriers to signing up for a telehealth visit, and health plans should have the flexibility to tailor telehealth offerings based on different needs. By using telehealth services to address low to moderate acuity conditions, follow-ups, and consultations, members can continue to receive necessary and high-quality care utilizing an innovative platform. In the area of behavioral health, access to behavioral health services can be a challenge due to provider shortages and perceived stigma surrounding mental illness. Telehealth services delivered virtually to computers, smartphones, and other devices may offer the potential to address these issues around access and quality of care. We are seeing results in this area during the pandemic, with missed appointments falling drastically and member compliance on the rise. Telehealth solutions can help improve access to and availability of care for rural Ohioans, increasing availability of providers and decreasing requirement to travel far distances.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony for the committee. We are proud to partner with you and our other state partners to better serve our members and all Ohioans. Should you or any member want to discuss this further, please contact Buckeye's Lead External Relations Specialist Mike Carroll or Buckeye's VP for Government Affairs Eric Poklar. Mike can be reached at dennis.m.carroll@centene.com or 614-942-3336. Eric can be reached at epoklar@centene.com or 614-674-0438.