



September 29, 2021  
Ohio Senate Health Committee  
Proponent Testimony – HB 122, Telehealth Services  
Leo Almeida, Ohio Government Relations Director, ACS CAN

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health Committee, I am Leo Almeida, Ohio Government Relations Director for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN). On behalf of the 72,000 Ohioans who will be diagnosed with cancer this year, ACS CAN is in support of HB 122 (provision of telehealth services) and urges this committee to give the bill favorable consideration.

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed greater burdens on cancer patients and their providers, but it has also revealed the critical role telemedicine can play in cancer care. Thanks to technology, many face-to-face encounters with patients and their health care providers can be supplemented by or, in some cases, substituted with telehealth visits that enable providers to deliver clinical services from a distance using options like video conferencing and remote monitoring. Telehealth provides cancer patients and survivors with a convenient means of accessing both cancer care and primary care – a particularly important option for individuals in rural areas of the country and the immunocompromised.

Telehealth services have the potential to serve the needs of patients across the continuum of oncology care. For example, some may utilize telehealth services to meet with genetic counselors to discuss prevention options; patients undergoing active treatment may be able to better manage symptoms or seek second opinions via telehealth; and cancer survivors can utilize telehealth to better manage the lasting side effects of treatment.

Importantly, patients are finding value in telehealth. A 2020 survey from ACS CAN found that more than half (54%) of cancer patients and survivors had an in-person medical appointment disrupted because of COVID-19. Many of these patients and their providers have turned to telehealth appointments to continue their care. Of those patients who have used telehealth, 95% found virtual appointments useful because it allowed them to speak with their provider sooner than waiting for a rescheduled in-person visit.

We recognize that the real-world application of telehealth services will continue to face challenges and undergo changes in the years ahead, but the pandemic has demonstrated the importance of putting an adaptable policy framework in place to support patient access to these services. It is critical that Ohio's cancer patients be allowed to reap the optimal benefits of telehealth services today and in the future and that is why we urge your support of HB 122.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.