

**Testimony Regarding House Bill 136**  
**Ohio House Health Provider Services Committee**  
**October 17, 2023**

Chairman Cutrona, Vice-Chair Gross, Ranking Member Somani and members of the House Health Provider Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in support of HB 136**, which would allow remote dispensing pharmacy services through the use of technology to patients at a distance.

My name is Maimuna Bruce, I am a Regulatory Affairs Manager at TelePharm and a licensed pharmacist. TelePharm is an innovative pharmacy software company whose telepharmacy solutions help pharmacies address challenges with pharmacy access by enabling pharmacists to provide services to underserved communities.

As the most visited member of the comprehensive healthcare team, access to a pharmacist is paramount to the health of entire communities. Today, pharmacies are experiencing a number of challenges, many are forcing pharmacies throughout Ohio and nationwide to close. These pharmacy closures have resulted in an increase in pharmacy deserts, which are communities where the average distance to the nearest pharmacy is a mile or greater.<sup>1</sup> Pharmacy deserts have left thousands of patients in Ohio, in both rural and urban areas, without convenient access to pharmacy services, which can contribute to growing healthcare disparities.

Telepharmacy, or remote dispensing pharmacy services, refers to the provision of care by pharmacists through the use of technology to patients located at a distance. Telepharmacy is utilized at a remote dispensing pharmacy, which is a brick and mortar pharmacy location where patients are able to have an experience not unlike their experience at a traditional pharmacy. How does it work? The patient drops off their prescription with a pharmacy technician who enters the prescription data into the computer system and captures images of the fill process along the way. The pharmacist, located at another licensed pharmacy, verifies the prescription, performing all the same steps they would in a traditional pharmacy setting including checking that the prescription information was entered correctly, checking for drug interactions, duplications in therapy etc., and using the images to confirm the prescription was filled correctly. Before the patient leaves the pharmacy they are counseled privately through HIPAA-compliant audiovisual technology. All of these steps are accomplished without changes to the scope of practice for both pharmacists and pharmacy technicians.

Since 2001 a total of 28 states have utilized telepharmacy as a safe and effective way to provide pharmacy services and address gaps in patient access. If passed, HB 136 will give Ohio pharmacies the **OPTION** to utilize telepharmacy to improve access to medications for Ohioans, and in some cases, a connection to a healthcare provider that may not have existed before. This bill also ensures this practice occurs in a safe manner while maintaining proper oversight, as required by law.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of HB 136. We welcome any questions committee members may have.

Sincerely,



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Manager, Regulatory Affairs, Telepharm

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<sup>1</sup> Sahota, H., Guzman, S., Tordera, L., Chan, M., Cocohoba, J., & Saberi, P. (2023). *Pharmacy deserts and pharmacies' roles post-extreme weather and climate events in the United States: A scoping review*. Journal of primary care & community health.