

The Honorable Jean Schmidt, Chair
Ohio House Health Committee
Statehouse
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chair Schmidt and members of the House Health Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter in support of House Bill 324. This bill, which would create responsible safeguards against the prescription of potentially harmful medications through telehealth and mail order, serves to protect patient health and strengthen trust in Ohio's healthcare system.

I am a licensed physician in the State of Ohio, Board certified in Pediatrics, and have been in practice for over 20 years. I worked in emergency medicine for most of my career and have seen patients suffering from the adverse effects of certain drugs with a high risk profile. Since my retirement from full-time practice, I have been working in telemedicine and know the limitations of this valuable, but limited form of health care. High risk, dangerous profile drugs should not be prescribed without a rigorous collection of vital signs and a physical exam which cannot be accomplished by telemedicine.

Telehealth and mail-order prescriptions have arisen as a valuable tool for patients, allowing them quicker access to the routine medications that assist them in their daily lives. While frequently beneficial, telehealth cannot however wholly replace the need for physical consultations and examinations when high-risk medications are prescribed. Certain drugs carry higher risks of severe, sometimes life-threatening, effects in patients. In these cases, in-person examinations allow healthcare professionals to more completely assess the patient, make better informed prescriptions, and establish the doctor-patient relationships vital to managing any potential negative reactions to the drugs.

In my practice today, there are certain medications which the platform does not include in its allowed formulary due to the high risk nature of the drugs. And as a conscientious physician, I would not, based on telemedicine interviews alone, prescribe drugs with a known high percentage of adverse reactions. I would not and could not virtually prescribe controlled substances, certain mental health medications, chemotherapeutic agents or abortifacients, to name just some of these high risk drugs.

By establishing the requirement that potentially harmful drugs only be prescribed alongside physical examinations, House Bill 324 establishes commonsense as a safeguard to proactively protect the health of patients in Ohio. Furthermore, this legislation serves to protect those in telehealth who operate in good faith with care toward patient safety from needing to compete with potential bad actors that offer prescriptions more freely and without regard for the patient. The bill, by strengthening the personal relationships with doctors and healthcare providers that effectively treat and support patients experiencing harmful side effects, additionally builds trust in Ohio's healthcare system and gives patients greater assurance that their prescriptions are safe.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.