



House Bill 546 – Proponent Testimony
May 16, 2018
House Health Committee

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the House Health Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 546.

My name is Dr. Brad Raetzke and I am the President-Elect of the American College of Emergency Physicians, Ohio Chapter (Ohio ACEP) and an emergency physician with Mid-Ohio Emergency Services, a group serving many emergency departments here in Central Ohio. On behalf of the nearly 1600 emergency medicine practitioners Ohio ACEP represents, I am here today to emphasize our support for the coverage of telemedicine services as provided for in House Bill 546.

As I am sure you are well aware, the emergency department is a high paced and complicated practice environment. Emergency physicians see and treat conditions that cross the entire spectrum of medicine. Something that is very prevalent in the emergency department are cases of mental illness. Many of our physician members don't get through a shift without seeing a patient experiencing a mental health or psychiatric episode.

In the case of psychiatric episodes, it is our duty to ensure that patient has appropriate and needed access to crisis mental health services. However, those services can be difficult to obtain. There are not enough psychiatric practitioners or mental health treatment options to serve this population. This shortage is exacerbated during nontraditional work hours, i.e.: after 5pm and on the weekend.

As a result, many of our patients are "boarded" in the emergency department until we are able to connect them with appropriate care. Psychiatric boarding is a problem we hear about from our members on a regular basis. And it is not a problem with an easy solution. We see House Bill 546 as a tool to address this problem. If we can provide psychiatric evaluations to these patients using telemedicine, and specialists can be reimbursed for those services, we would expect increased access for our patients in the emergency department. Ohio ACEP believes these benefits will be realized statewide, but in particular in rural and underserved areas.

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As technology progresses, it is critical we use these tools to offer the best care to our patients. Many hospital emergency departments are incorporating telemedicine technologies into their systems. As explained in this testimony, this tool could increase access to psychiatric evaluations. This technology could also be used for a variety of specialist consultations needed to give patients in the emergency department timely and comprehensive evaluations.

Ohio ACEP applauds the introduction of HB 546 by Representative Patton and we look forward to continuing the discussion on how this bill will improve patient care.

Thank you for your consideration of this perspective and I would be happy to answer any questions from the committee.

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