

**Testimony by Samantha Lippolis, Director of Telehealth, UC Health
House Health Committee**

**Support of Telemedicine Reimbursement Policy
HB 546
May 16, 2018**

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the House Health Committee – thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in support of House Bill 546 that will require a health benefit plan to cover telemedicine services on the same basis and to the same extent that the plan covers in-person health services. I’m Samantha Lippolis, the Director of Telemedicine for UC Health.

UC Health is Cincinnati’s academic health center. We have been committed to our tri-partite mission of education, research and clinical excellence since our first hospital was founded 200 years ago. We are the only health system in southwest Ohio caring for the most vulnerable, providing comprehensive and coordinated care, providing specialized and lifesaving services, advancing public health, and training future health care professionals.

Ohio Hospital Association’s telehealth workgroup was formed in 2011. The OHA brought stakeholders from across the state together to define priorities and quality metrics for telehealth. UC Health is the current workgroup chair and the health committee has been provided the spring 2018 white paper. Both UC Health and the Ohio Hospital Association are in support of HB 546.

I’m here to offer support for the telemedicine coverage in HB 546 and thank the Health Committee Members for their leadership on this issue. At UC Health, we know that telemedicine is proven to improve access to care. It provides the right care, for the right patient, at the right time, while improving the patient’s experience.

- An example would be a cancer patient. The patient needs to see three to five different types of doctors, all treating their cancer. Multidisciplinary clinic is a model where the patient comes to one location and sees all the doctors at one time. However, many clinics are not physically in the same location, so instead we have the patient drive from appointment to appointment to see all their specialists. By using telemedicine, we can bring all the doctors into the same room via video to meet with the patient. We can use telemedicine to create a multidisciplinary clinic. Telehealth will reduce the burden on a person fighting cancer by eliminating the drive to multiple appointments, and allows the doctors to share in treatment and decision making during the appointment. The current laws provide coverage for the services in person, but if video is used, it would not currently be covered.
- The current federal regulations do not allow counties in a metropolitan statistical area (MSA) to be covered for telemedicine. HB 546 provides coverage statewide and expands coverage to

include all counties – not only rural. Examples are Clark, Allen, Lawrence and Brown County. These counties have healthcare access issues but are included in MSAs, which excludes them from telemedicine coverage. The current regulations require the patient to drive to another community in person to get specialty care instead of being able to be treated in their hometowns via telemedicine.

- Statewide health plan coverage for telemedicine services is an important part of expansion and adoption for telemedicine. As health care providers, it is very difficult to offer a service that is only covered by a small portion of health plans. Additionally, geographic restrictions make it even more complicated to know who is eligible. Until coverage is consistent, doctors are nervous to expand or even start a program.

UC Health has committed significant investments in technology and staff to provide the secure HIPAA compliant tools and process to support expansion of telemedicine. UC Health and other health systems are committed and poised to provide all Ohioans access to telemedicine services.

UC Health applauds your efforts to ensure that telemedicine in Ohio can be fully utilized and barriers to access care are removed. Again, thank you for allowing me to provide proponent testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.