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State Representative

Chair Brinkman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Boggs – thank you for allowing me here to provide sponsor testimony on HB580. Unfortunately my joint sponsor Rep Patton is unable to join us today but I know he is passionate about this issue.

HB580 is a relatively simple bill. It states that during an emergency declared by the Governor or the President, health insurers must provide coverage for telemedicine services in the same manner that they cover in-person services, if doing so is determined to be in the best interest of the patient by the health care provider. This year has certainly shown us that it is difficult to predict what sort of emergencies may arise. It is our job to make sure people can get vital services they need during such times.

This bill doesn't add covered services. It is not expanding what insurers must cover overall. This bill doesn't pick winners or losers in terms of which providers qualifies and which providers do not. It simply says if a service was covered in-person before, then during an emergency the service will be covered by telemedicine in the same way – one substituting for the other as may be necessary for patient safety.

Right now there is so much confusion, plans are changing and it is very unclear what plan will cover what telemedicine service at what rate. People don't know what is covered and what isn't. The end result is many forego care leading to worse health outcomes. People's health suffers. Small private practices lose the predictability and stability of income that is so important for any small business. Large organizations spend significant time and resources trying to figure it out – lots of money is being spent in our health care system without any value. This unpredictability and inconsistency is bad for everyone.

I am sure I don't need to tell anyone in this room how many health challenges we had as a state even before Coronavirus – from depression and mental health issues to chronic diseases like diabetes or high blood pressure – Ohioans have been struggling. This bill can make sure things don't get worse.