



American
TeleDentistry
Association

Marc Bernard Ackerman
DMD, MBA
Executive Director

The Honorable Thomas Brinkman, Jr.
Chair, House Insurance Committee
Ohio House of Representatives
77 S High St.
Columbus, OH 43215

RE: HB 122 – Amendment Request

Dear Chairman Brinkman:

My name is Dr. Marc Ackerman and I am the Executive Director of the American Teledentistry Association (ATDA), I am also a licensed and practicing dentist, work and teach at a major Boston facility, am a recipient of the B.F. and Helen E. Dewel Award, and have a deep passion for helping others and making sure that everyone receives the care that they deserve. That is why I signed on with the American Teledentistry Association's mission to increase access to quality, affordable dental care and that is why I write to you today on the critical legislative matter regarding HB122. To that end, please see my specific comments below.

The American Teledentistry Association and our member businesses believe it is vital to the oral health of Ohioans to include the profession of dentistry in the telehealth omnibus bill. As written, HB122 includes many healthcare practitioners – physicians, psychologists, physical therapists, dietitians, social workers, audiologists, speech-language pathologists, but it does not include dentists. Access to affordable, high-quality dental care is limited in Ohio. In fact, according to the American Dental Association's Health Policy Institute, 35% of Ohioans who did not visit the dentist did not because they could not find a convenient time or location to do so – teledentistry offers an actionable solution to that obstacle. Furthermore, 55% of the Ohioans who did not go to the dentist did not due to cost. With significant cost-savings enabled by technological innovations, teledentistry offers patients a more cost- and time-effective alternative to traditional dentistry without sacrificing quality of care.

Teledentistry has been contemplated by the Ohio legislature, but only in a very narrow manner. The current definition of "teledentistry" at Ohio Code §4715.43 only enables the "virtual dental home" model where technology connects a licensed dentist with licensed allied dental professionals working in underserved populations. Hence, there is no mention of the treating dentist within the definition other than his or her authorization. This means that, in Ohio, a licensed dentist that treats a patient remotely through technology without the intervention of an allied dental professional is not considered to be practicing using "teledentistry." Accordingly, inclusion of dentists in HB122 would bring dentists under the general umbrella of "telehealth" and keep the Dental Board rules regarding remote care consistent with other health care providers.

A: 396 Washington Street
Suite 257
Wellesley Hills, MA 02481

P: (781) 304-4409

E: admin@americanteledentistry.org

W: www.americanteledentistry.org



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Not only will this amendment significantly increase access to oral health care for many Ohioans who have been excluded from care for generations, but it will also produce appreciably lower oral health costs for Ohio residents, businesses, and government programs.

The efficacy of telehealth in dentistry to deliver high-quality, affordable, convenient, and efficacious care has been proven during the COVID-19 pandemic and has been verified by numerous academic and clinical articles.

Including dentistry in telehealth has the opportunity to deliver care to Ohioans who, for far too long, have been excluded from the chance to get the smile they deserve. Your neighbors who live in rural Ohio and do not have a conveniently located dentist or your friends who live incredibly busy lives and simply do not have the time to go to a physical office can now – thanks to technology – **get affordable, quality care when, where, and how they want it.** Let telehealth give Ohioans the flexibility they want and deserve. **I urge you to amend HB122 to include dentists in the list of telehealth providers.**

If you have any questions, feel free to call me at (781) 304-4409. I would be happy to offer any clinical insight that you or the committee would like.

Sincerely,

Marc Bernard Ackerman, DMD, MBA, FACD

CC: Members of the House Insurance Committee

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