



**Written Proponent Testimony - House Bill 122: Telehealth
Brian Evans, MD - President
Ohio Psychiatric Physicians Association
The Ohio Senate Health Committee
September 29, 2021**

As president of the Ohio Psychiatric Physicians Association (OPPA), a statewide medical specialty organization representing more than 1,000 physicians who specialize in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental illnesses, including substance use disorders, I write today on behalf of the OPPA regarding HB 122. This legislation would make permanent several adjustments which were made to the rules concerning delivery of telemedicine services during the early days of the pandemic. HB 122 would codify practices utilized by providers on a widespread basis in advance of the state medical board's upcoming deadline for the termination of the emergency provisions at the end of December.

Utilization of telehealth is a cost-effective and integral part of serving our patient populations. The pandemic has normalized telehealth at a rapid rate, and for many Ohio physicians and their patients, virtual visits are now a part of their standard practice. We provide high quality care to many underserved Ohioans using telehealth, and with your support of HB 122, that will continue once the threat posed by COVID-19 has diminished.

We have the technology to help provide many individuals with the care they need, and the legislature has the opportunity to help us continue the progress that we have made in utilization of telemedicine during this public health crisis. Increasing use of telepsychiatry helps to expand access to types of treatment that are in particularly high demand. Patients who pay for health insurance are paying for benefits that include mental health care and substance use disorders, and telemedicine allows even those without transportation to receive care.

OPPA supports this bill to continue efforts to address health disparities by providing another means for patients in need to obtain necessary services, including mental health and substance use disorder treatment. Continued access through telemedicine will have a powerful, positive impact on the lives of many Ohioans.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments, and please feel free to contact our organization with any questions.