



Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and all members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit comments in favor of HB 122 and access to telehealth. The Ohio Counseling Association (OCA) is the professional association representing licensed professional clinical counselors, licensed professional counselors, and counselor educators throughout Ohio.

As you have heard from other groups, if there is a bright spot in the COVID-19 pandemic it is the increased utilization of and access to telehealth. Our members and the patients we serve have found the use of telehealth a critical component to continued care during the pandemic. As this committee knows, many Ohioans have found they are in need of mental health services even more at this time as they grapple with exacerbated anxiety, depression, suicide, addiction and other diagnoses.

Our patients have found that the availability of utilizing counseling via telehealth is an option they would like to continue post-COVID. Those with transportation limitations, physical limitations that makes traveling to treatment difficult, or other limitations would benefit from this being a continued option. We appreciate the bill sponsors' recognition of that fact and their introduction of this important legislation.

We would ask that the committee consider adopting an amendment to expand the providers under the bill to include licensed professional counselors in addition to licensed professional clinical counselors who are already included.

Members of the committee, we thank you for considering the perspective of the Ohio Counseling Association. We hope to work with this body to move this bill forward so that counselors can continue to provide Ohioans high quality mental health services.