

To: Members of the Ohio Senate Health Committee

Fr: Joe Rosato, Director of Government Relations, Ohio State Medical Association

Da: September 29, 2021

Re: HB 122

---

On behalf of the Ohio State Medical Association (OSMA), the state's oldest and largest professional organization representing Ohio physicians, medical residents, and medical students, we write today in support of House Bill 122.

OSMA is a long-time telehealth advocate and has previously worked with the legislature on issues related to telehealth on numerous occasions. As you may know, the practice of telehealth has exploded over the past year during the COVID pandemic, providing physicians with different options for safely treating patients when the patient is unable to come to the office. Early on in the COVID crisis, the State Medical Board of Ohio temporarily relaxed some of its rules regarding certain situations in which the physician-patient interaction must occur in-person in order to accommodate necessary patient care safely and to ease some of the strain imposed on medical facilities.

HB 122 contains provisions that would make some of the telehealth rule changes enacted last year due to the pandemic permanent. As of now, the medical board intends to resume enforcement of the rules as was typical prior to the pandemic after December 31, 2021. Additionally, by ensuring coverage parity by insurers for telehealth visits, the bill will help increase access to care, may reduce health care costs, and can improve health outcomes for many Ohioans.

The pandemic has demonstrated that making usage of telehealth easier for both physicians and patients is a valuable tool in increasing access to high quality care, particularly for underserved populations. Physicians are best able to determine under what circumstances and how often they need to see their patients in-person and when utilization of telemedicine is permissible. HB 122 would help physicians and their patients more flexibility to choose the best method for delivery, while maintaining the applicable standard of care.

We encourage the legislature to take advantage of the opportunity to codify the progress on telehealth made during the pandemic. Thank you for your attention to our remarks on HB 122 and please feel free to reach out to us with any questions.