



Dr. Sarah Rush, MD
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Proponent Testimony, Ohio House Bill 122 (HB 122)
Ohio Senate Health Committee
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Chairman Huffman, Vice-Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and the members of the Senate Health Committee, my name is Dr. Sarah Rush, and I am the Chief Medical Information Officer at Akron Children's Hospital. Thank you for the opportunity to express our hospital's support and submit proponent testimony for Ohio House Bill 122 (HB 122), the Telehealth Expansion Act. I would also like to express the appreciation of Akron Children's Hospital to State Representatives Mark Frazier and Adam Holmes for their insight and effort in drafting this legislation.

Akron Children's Hospital is committed to ensuring that all of our providers are able to provide safe and effective health care services to the patients and families we are privileged to serve. As one of the largest pediatric health care delivery systems in Ohio, Akron Children's Hospital has expanded to regions with limited resources in pediatric expertise, and the boundaries where we provide care continue to expand, not only within the state of Ohio, but to states outside of Ohio as well. The landscape of care is changing rapidly, and the use of telehealth services is becoming increasingly important to the care we provide.

Telehealth utilizes technology to connect patients – and their families – to health care services from the comfort and safety of their home, school or work. Through tools such as secure video consultations and messaging, providers can offer a variety of clinical services, including well-check and subspecialty visits, some available on a 24-hour basis. This delivery of care is cost-effective, reduces exposure to viruses and minimizes wait times, particularly to subspecialists. Another benefit of telehealth is that hospitals are able to facilitate staff training and continuing medical education when in-person training may not be an option.

In the weeks and months after the announcement of Ohio Governor Mike DeWine's stay-at-home order in early 2020, Akron Children's Hospital experienced an exponential increase in telehealth appointments. Between March and April of 2020, the total number of completed telehealth visits increased by 88 percent. Additionally, our clinical interactions utilizing telehealth related to behavioral health saw an annual increase from hundreds to thousands over the course of 2020.

HB 122 is important legislation because it expands the list of eligible providers who utilize telehealth services. Also, the bill broadens access and insurance coverage of telehealth, which is becoming vital as these services are becoming engrained into the models of care that we provide to Ohioans every day. Ultimately, telehealth services increase access to care for patients, utilizing technology to remove barriers between them and the health care professionals committed to their care. We have every expectation that these interactions will increase and expand as technology advances. The Telehealth Expansion Act lays the groundwork for these advances to continue.

Thank you for the opportunity to share Akron Children's perspective. I respectfully request that this committee favorably report Ohio House Bill 122 and move the Telehealth Expansion Act a step closer to becoming law.