



Marc Bernard Ackerman
DMD, MBA
Executive Director

October 18, 2021

The Honorable Stephen A. Huffman
Chair, Ohio Senate Health Committee
Ohio State Senate
1 Capitol Square, Ground Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

RE: Opposition Testimony to House Bill 122; Requesting an Amendment

Dear Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, and Ranking Member Antonio:

My name is Dr. Marc Ackerman, and I am the Executive Director of the American Teledentistry Association. I am also a licensed and practicing dentist who works and teaches at a major medical facility in Boston. As a dentist, I am passionate about helping others and making sure that everyone receives the oral health care that they deserve. I joined the ATDA in the hopes of increasing Americans' access to quality, affordable dental care. It is in the interest of achieving that goal that I write to you today regarding provisions in House Bill 122.

On behalf of the American Teledentistry Association (ATDA) and our membership, I am writing to express opposition to House Bill 122 unless amended to include dentists.

The American Teledentistry Association and our member businesses believe that passing House Bill 122 in its current form, thereby precluding dentists from delivering health care services via the appropriate telehealth technologies, would be detrimental to the oral health of the citizens of Ohio. As written, House Bill 122 explicitly mentions a variety of health care providers – including physicians, psychologists, physical therapists, dietitians, social workers, audiologists, speech-language pathologists, optometrists, and others – while excluding dentists.

The decision to leave dentists out of the list of providers permitted to deliver their services via telehealth modalities is unconscionable considering the fact that access to affordable, high-quality dental care is limited in Ohio. For instance, 35% of Ohioans who did not see a dentist made this decision because they could not find a convenient time or place to receive dental care, according to the American Dental Association's Health Policy Institute. Teledentistry services like the ones offered by our members would serve as an actionable solution to those obstacles, enabling patients and providers to meet virtually at their convenience. Furthermore, 55% of the Ohio residents who did not go to the dentist identified the cost of the services as a barrier to accessing dental care. 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.

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The Ohio Legislature has previously passed a teledentistry statute but only in a very narrow manner. The current definition of "teledentistry" found at Ohio Code §4715.43 enables providers to engage in the "virtual dental home" model in which telehealth technologies connect a licensed dentist with licensed dental professionals working with underserved populations. That statute does not permit a dentist to interact with a patient directly and without the intervention of an allied dental professional. **Should House Bill 122 pass without including dentists, dentists would be the only health care providers unable to treat patients remotely in the state.**

The ATDA urges the committee to support AM1782, an amendment which would include dentists in the list of providers approved to practice via telehealth. This revision to House Bill 122 would bring dentists under the general umbrella of "telehealth," keeping the Dental Board's rules regarding remote care consistent with other health care providers. 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 lower the cost of dental care appreciably for Ohio residents, businesses, and government programs.

The efficacy of teledentistry in delivering high-quality, affordable, convenient, and effective care has been proven during the COVID-19 pandemic and verified by numerous academic and clinical articles.

Enabling dentists to provide oral health care via telehealth will increase access to care for Ohio residents who have been excluded from the chance to get the smile they deserve for far too long. Ohioans who live in rural areas, far away from the nearest dentist, as well as citizens who lead incredibly busy lives and simply do not have the time to go to a brick-and-mortar location can now – thanks to telehealth technologies – **receive affordable, high-quality care when, where, and how they want it.** Let teledentistry give Ohioans the flexibility they deserve. **I urge you to support AM1782 to include dentists in the list of providers approved to practice telehealth.**

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 may require on House Bill 122.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Marc Bernard Ackerman in black ink, followed by the text "DMD, MBA" written in a similar style.

Marc Bernard Ackerman, DMD, MBA, FACD

CC: Members of the Senate Health Committee
Ohio Senate President Matt Huffman
George Poulos, Ohio Senate Policy Advisor