



**Senate Health Committee  
HB 122 - proponent Testimony  
12/8/2021**

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Chairman Huffman, Vice-Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer proponent testimony regarding House Bill 122, telehealth legislation.

CDF-Ohio is a statewide non-profit organization which serves as an independent voice for all children. Born out of the civil rights movement, with more than four decades of advocacy in Ohio, it is the mission of the Children's Defense Fund to champion policies and programs that lift children out of poverty, protect them from abuse and neglect, and ensure their access to appropriate and targeted health care, quality education, and nutritional wellness.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light many of the shortcomings in our healthcare system. We have layered a public health crisis and an economic crisis on top of a healthcare system already fraught with racial inequities in maternal and child health. The telehealth temporary expansion may be one of the most important service innovation that emerges from the pandemic.

In March of 2020, shortly following Governor DeWine's state of emergency declaration due to COVID-19, the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) and the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OMHAS) executed an emergency rule to expand Ohio's telehealth options in order to reduced the risk of exposure to COVID-19 for patients and Ohio's health care providers.

Over the intervening 21 months, telehealth has proved to be very popular with patients and providers, not only for the reasons of safety, but because it allowed Ohioans to continue to access healthcare throughout the pandemic.



House Bill 122, would expand on the types of providers who may bill for telehealth services, adds new services that a provider may bill for and implements new ways in which providers can see patients across state borders.

These are essential as we move into a post-pandemic world where flexible, accessible healthcare delivery is expected. The past several months exhibit not just the demand for expanded telehealth services, but proof that it can be done well.

As providers and community health centers continue to respond to crises that confront our vulnerable communities, including the opioid epidemic, COVID-19 pandemic, and the recent Delta and Omicron variants, they have greatly expanded their use of telehealth. In addition to supporting increased access to timely care for our underserved populations, telehealth is being used to overcome clinical workforce shortages, decrease “no-show” rates, maintaining provider-patient relationships and easing of language barriers.

Ensuring that patients have adequate access to care virtually, as well as in-person, remains essential for improving population health and achieving health equity and HB 122 gives providers and our community partners another tool to use in serving Ohio’s most vulnerable populations.

One of the main missions of Children’s Defense Fund-Ohio is to protect healthcare access for children and for that reason we strongly support HB 122.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 122.

If you have any questions, please reach out to me at [kvyzral@childrensdefense.org](mailto:kvyzral@childrensdefense.org)



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