



Representative Thomas West, *49<sup>th</sup> House District*

Ohio Telehealth Commission Sponsor Testimony

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chairwoman Gavarone, Ranking Member Antonio, and fellow members of the House Health Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 617.

This bill creates the Ohio Telehealth Commission, which is a commission that will examine the practices of telehealth and make recommendations based upon observations and individual expertise. The commission will also be tasked with preparing an annual report outlining the recommendations that were made and describing the status of Ohio's telehealth system.

The commission is to be comprised of the following:

One representative of a health care facility

One health care practitioner

One health care workforce educator

One individual with knowledge or expertise in telehealth or health information technology

One representative of the telecommunications industry

One representative of the business community

One representative of a health insurer

One representative of a labor union whose members work primarily in the health care field

One member of the Commission on Minority Health

Two members of the General Assembly, one from the majority party and one from the minority party.

Now that we've established the foundation, let's get into the foreseen application of the bill. With the advancements being made in telemedicine and mobile health technology, I see the telehealth commission as a guiding light in leading the way on these breakthroughs. The commission is to act as a unified body comprised of private and public representatives providing guidance as the state and nation continue to innovate in this industry. Not only is it a marriage of private and public, it's also bipartisan. We are in uncharted territory when it comes to having accessible healthcare on your phone, so the health commission will be a means of jumping out in front of the problems and improving telehealth within the state.

The telehealth commission is also ideal in aiding those communities that exist in rural Ohio where access to the nearest healthcare facility may be an hour or more away. Last week on the 14th, the FCC gained a majority of votes from its commissioners to increase rural healthcare funding by \$171 million per year<sup>i</sup>. Telemedicine was emphasized in the proposal to increase this funding because of the positive impact it is having on rural communities with barriers to physical access. In closing, I'll say that as the field continues to grow, we should be proactive and not reactive, so that Ohio can be a leader in telehealth. Thank you for your time. I'm happy to take questions.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-351633A1.pdf>