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Committees:

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Health

State Representative Adam Holmes

97th House District of Ohio

House Bill 679 Sponsor Testimony

Chairman Brinkman, Vice Chairman Antani, Ranking Member Boggs, members of the House Insurance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 679. House Bill 679 seeks to expand the number of Telehealth services available to Ohioans and those from other states seeking medical care from Ohio providers.

House Bill 679 will do three things. First, expand the list of providers that can provide Telehealth services to include psychologists, physical therapists, dietitians, social workers, audiologists, speech-language pathologists, and many licensed counselors. It will also extend the definition of telehealth services to include emails and phone calls in addition to virtual visits. This will make providers more accessible to patients, and cut down on the disruption to daily life that comes with medical appointments. Both the provider and the patient must agree to a Telehealth service, and both have the ability to request an in-person appointment if they feel it is best.

Second, the bill provides clear regulations for protecting patient privacy. It requires providers use secure video technologies and take steps to protect username and password information, as well as electronic communications between the provider and the patient.

Third, the bill sets procedures for reimbursing providers and ensures patients who elect to use telehealth services will see no changes in their out-of-pocket expenses. Under this bill, health plans cannot impose cost sharing requirements for email and telephone communications with a

provider. For other telehealth services, the cost sharing requirement on the patient cannot exceed what they would pay for an in-person visit. In regards to reimbursement, providers will be reimbursed for services provided via email or phone call. This reimbursement will be determined by tallying the minutes spent per patient on a running total. The health plan will then reimburse the provider for a block of time spent on those email and telephone services that is equal to the standard amount of time for a telehealth visit.

At no point in our lifetimes has the need for quick access to quality care been so obvious. By passing House Bill 679 we can give all Ohioans greater access to physical and mental health treatment, allow our providers to take full advantage of modern technology, and reduce the time and travel burden many Ohioans incur to seek medical assistance. And we can accomplish all of this without raising healthcare costs.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 679. I am happy to answer any questions you might have at this time.