

Bill: HB-43: Expand practice of telemedicine 2021-01-28 03:00 PM - (H) Human Services

Position: Proponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: Yes

Organization: Montana Telehealth Alliance

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Written Statement:

Good afternoon,

My name is Sarah Compton, and I am currently the vice president-elect of the Montana Telehealth Alliance. I have spent over five years working for a Montana-based health system on their telehealth program, and I am submitting this testimony in support of HB 43 on behalf of the Montana Telehealth Alliance.

Telehealth has seen significant, if not exponential growth in the past 12 months due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Much of this is due to the Center for Medicare and Medicaid passing waivers to allow for the expanded delivery of telehealth services, and many private insurers have followed that guidance. Prior to COVID, healthcare providers were limited in how and where they were able to conduct telehealth visits- some insurance carriers didn't cover telehealth visits at all, others did not allow visits connecting providers to patients in their own home, and still others limited the services to certain licenses. What we in the telehealth field know is that telehealth- when applicable- is a safe and effective means of service delivery.

Telehealth is not going away. Technologies are cheaper and more accessible than ever, adoption from providers and patients is much higher, due to the waivers mentioned above that have been put in place for the duration of the Public Health Emergency. We need to continue to build upon the legacy of telehealth within this state. Some Montana telehealth networks have been around for almost 30 years, and I want to give credit to previous legislators and advocates for telehealth for passing previous legislation to give parity to telehealth visits within the state of Montana.

The language of House Bill 43 would continue to clarify the definitions of telehealth, and shore-up the provisions of telehealth visits, making this type of clinical service delivery more accessible to more people, provide more clarity on the language around telehealth within the

Montana Code Annotated, and allow for the continued expansion of medical access to all Montanans- especially those living in rural areas.

The Montana Telehealth Alliance has been around for over 20 years, and our mission is to advocate for and support the advancement of healthcare by the use of telehealth for the benefit of all Montanans. This bill does just that, and I ask, on behalf of our membership- which ranges from large health systems, to critical access hospitals, member associations that support the montana hospitals and federally qualified health centers, mental health providers, and others- that you pass this bill.

Thank you for your time.