House Bill 5070 (Bellock)

Improving Access to Healthcare with Telehealth

Telehealth holds the promise to significantly impact some of the most challenging problems of our current healthcare system: access to care, cost effective delivery, and distribution of limited providers. Illinois faces a shortage of healthcare providers, particularly specialists and behavioral health treatment professionals. <u>Lack of access to care is one of the major reasons why health issues, especially behavioral health issues, remain untreated, reducing patient health and increasing the cost of care.</u>

In order to better address healthcare needs throughout the state, <u>this bill would expand who is allowed to practice telehealth</u> to include currently Illinois-licensed:

> physicians; physicians assistants; advanced practice nurses; registered nurses; clinical psychologists; dentists; occupational therapists; pharmacists; physical therapists; clinical social workers; speech language pathologists; audiologists; hearing instrument dispensers; and mental health professionals and clinicians.

- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Projections, the total number of job openings for nurses due to growth and replacement will be 1.09 million by 2024.
- The national projected shortage of physicians in internal medicine will increase by up to 94,700 by 2025 according to the Association of American Medical Colleges.
- Presence Health uses telehealth to expand access to and increase the quality of currently provided care, not to replace existing nurses, doctors or other clinicians.
- This legislation would not change licensing procedures for Illinois medical professionals; it would instead allow clinicians who are already licensed in Illinois to provide services via telehealth.

<u>Better for Our Community</u> … access to care is critical to the patient who arrives at the ICU and needs a consultation by a specialist – when seconds matter. Instead of waiting weeks for an appointment, a mother can be connected with a dentist to examine her child's missing tooth. A son can connect with his mother's pharmacist to talk about the side effects of her medication as she has labored breathing and is not able to readily travel. A child, struggling in school, is able to connect to a social worker with her parents' permission - on-site to address feelings of isolation and fear.

Telehealth is not a separate and distinct service, rather a modality that enables providers to deliver already-covered care in a way that improves health and lowers the cost of care without increasing utilization (*Alliance of Community Health Plans*).

Please Co-Sponsor and Vote Yes on House Bill 5070 to Improve Access to Healthcare in Illinois!

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Why is Telehealth Important?

Telehealth increases access to healthcare:

- Remote patients can more easily obtain clinical services.
- Remote hospitals can provide emergency and intensive care consultation and services.

Telehealth improves health outcomes:

- Patients diagnosed and treated earlier often have improved outcomes and less costly treatments.
- Patients with Telehealth supported ICU's have substantially reduced mortality rates, reduced complications, and reduced hospital stays.

Telehealth reduces healthcare costs:

- Home monitoring programs can reduce high cost hospital visits.
- High cost patient transfers for stroke and other emergencies are reduced.

Telehealth assists in addressing shortages and misdistribution of healthcare providers:

- Specialists can serve more patients using Telehealth technologies.
- Nursing shortages can be addressed using Telehealth technologies.

Telehealth supports clinical education programs:

- Rural clinicians can more easily obtain continuing education and consult with specialists remotely.

Telehealth improves support for patients and families:

- Patients can stay in their local communities and, when hospitalized away from home, can keep in contact with family and friends.
- Many telehealth applications empower patients to play an active role in their healthcare.

Telehealth helps the environment:

- Reducing extended travel to obtain necessary care reduces the related carbon footprint.

Telehealth improves organizational productivity:

- Employees can avoid absences from work when telehealth services are available on site or when employees can remotely participate in consultations about family members.
- Clinicians can avoid "drive time" that takes away from patient time and fill missed appointments with patients who are waiting.

These examples illustrate some improved outcomes and cost savings being achieved by telehealth programs:

- Home monitoring of chronic diseases is reducing hospital visits by as much as 50% by keeping patients stable through daily monitoring.
- The national average for re-admission to hospitals within 30 days following a heart failure episode is 20%. Telehealth monitoring programs have reduced that level to less than 4%.
- Timely provision of treatments that effectively reverse the consequences of a stroke have risen from 15% to 85% due to the availability of telestroke programs.
- Telehealth support to Intensive Care Units (often called eICUs) is reducing mortality rates by 15 – 30% and substantially reducing complications and length of stay.
- Telehealth retinopathy screening programs support early identification of serious eye disease and reduce the incidence of blindness in diabetic patients.