



Thomas L. Bell
President

To: Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

From: Chad Austin
Senior Vice President Government Relations

Date: March 19, 2018

Re: House Bill 2674

The Kansas Hospital Association appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on House Bill 2674. Telemedicine is an important tool in providing access to needed health care services. It is the belief of our members that through the advancement of this technology and its utilization, Kansans will experience high quality, accessible care regardless of residing in a rural or urban locality.

Telemedicine brings many benefits to Kansas from a variety of perspectives. Patients have increased access to services that may not be readily available in their community. This access to care is not only more convenient to the patient, but also may reduce long term health care costs associated with treatment avoidance due to lack of available services. Physicians and other health care providers realize benefits with telemedicine as well. It provides clinical support when needed as well as local coverage in areas that may have health care provider shortages. The community and employer benefits that are achieved through telemedicine are notable as well. Communities not only have access to services that may not otherwise be as readily available, but it also keeps the healthcare dollar in the local community. Employers realize benefits through telemedicine as the amount of “lost work” time is reduced since healthcare may be provided locally.

With all of the benefits that may be attained through embracing telemedicine, one may wonder what has prevented this technology from being more widely used. While there continues to be some clinical, legal, and social barriers that remain, the primary reason that is constraining the widespread use of telemedicine is coverage. According to the American Telemedicine Association, more than half of the states across the U.S. have implemented some form of coverage parity for telemedicine services. In essence, coverage parity provides reimbursement for telemedicine services regardless if the service is delivered in a face-to-face setting or through telemedicine. The recognition of telemedicine services has varied among public and private payers. At present, Medicare and Medicaid typically provides some level of coverage and reimbursement for the distant site facility and the professional services. However, the level of coverage by commercial insurance carriers is much more varied.

Kansas Hospital Association

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In regards to House Bill 2674, KHA appreciates the clarification related to including physician assistants and advanced practice registered nurses are included in the legislation. These professions are instrumental in hospitals utilizing telemedicine services.

KHA believes every Kansan deserves access to quality health care. Telemedicine is one way to ensure that our rural communities have the same access to health services as urban areas. The rural nature of our state coupled with the anticipated health care workforce shortages in future years makes encouraging telemedicine programs in Kansas imperative.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.