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December 7, 2021

The Honorable Stephen A. Huffman  
Chairman  
Ohio Senate Health Committee  
1 Capitol Square  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chairman Huffman,

It has come to our attention that the Senate Committee on Health will soon have a hearing on [H.B. 122](#), the Telemedicine Act. Should it become law, this legislation would expand the list of providers who may bill for telehealth services, add new services that a provider may bill for, and permanently suspend outmoded regulations limiting access to care. On behalf of the 124,099 members of the Council for Citizens Against Government Waste (CCAGW) in Ohio, I urge you to support this legislation and move it to the floor for vote as quickly as possible.

Telehealth offers an alternative to in-person care that is affordable and accessible, especially for rural and elderly patients. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic Ohio temporarily suspended regulations that limit telehealth. The [State Medical Board of Ohio](#) declared pre-pandemic telemedicine rules would go back into effect on September 17, 2021. After further discussion, [the Board delayed](#) the date to December 31, 2021, due to concerns about COVID-19 variants.

H.B. 122 provides a permanent expansion of coverage of telehealth services, expands the list of practitioners who can provide telehealth services, and makes telehealth reforms permanent. This bill [passed](#) the House of Representatives by a vote 94-0 on April 15, 2021.

In response to COVID-19, the [federal](#), [state](#), and local governments adapted their healthcare policies to better meet the needs of patients. McKinsey & Company's Healthcare and Services Division [reported](#) that telemedicine usage increased from 11 percent to 46 percent in the first quarter of 2020 compared to the first quarter of 2019. Telehealth regulations were temporarily suspended in many states and at the federal level. They should now be permanently eliminated.

Rural healthcare access, which has long been a growing concern, was worsened by COVID-19. Approximately 60 million people, or [about 20 percent](#), live in rural areas, and there have been 136 rural hospital closures since 2010. Telehealth provides options for these patients by allowing virtual care appointments for those who can't travel to their doctor.

Again, I urge you to move quickly to send H.B. 122 to the floor for a vote. Improving the opportunities for greater access to telehealth by enacting H.B. 122 into law will give patients more control over their healthcare.

Sincerely,

*Tom Schatz*