

Testimony Re: Telemedicine

Special Committee on Health

Presented by Jennifer Westerberg Caswell

on behalf of

Kansas Physical Therapy Association

October 20, 2017

Mister Chairman, Members of the Committee:

My name is Jennifer Caswell, and I am the Legislative Chair for the Kansas Physical Therapy Association. The Kansas Physical Therapy Association (KPTA) is a non-profit professional association representing physical therapists, physical therapist assistants who are licensed to practice in Kansas, and Kansas physical therapist students and physical therapist assistant students. KPTA is a chapter of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), the national professional organization representing more than 100,000 members.

Like other providers, physical therapists across the United States are increasingly turning to telehealth to deliver healthcare services to patients and clients. The American Physical Therapy Association's Board of Directors has defined telehealth in that it "encompasses a variety of health care and health promotion activities, including, but not limited to, education, advice, reminders, interventions, and monitoring of interventions". (APTA: Telehealth; Amended BOD G03-03-07-12).

The use of telehealth in the practice of physical therapy is simply the delivery of physical therapy services by way of secure electronic communications; it is not a new set of interventions that constitutes an expansion in scope of practice. As such, there shouldn't be any change in the PT practice act needed. We are in full support of HB 2206, introduced by Representative Jim Kelly. By allowing for coverage of telehealth, this bill will improve access to needed healthcare services across our state.

Physical therapy has been successful in providing telehealth services in the Veterans' Administration for some time now across the country. Telehealth has also been utilized in rural areas, where a PT is not within driving distance and can provide education and intervention to assist a patient in their plan of care. Utilizing expertise in certain interventions, telehealth can provide effective treatment for patients where a therapist who is experienced in a certain type of intervention, post-operative arthroplasty care, for example, can provide education and intervention without having to be on-site. The APTA and physical therapists have been doing much research in this area to provide the best care for our patients.

Telehealth is an extension of what physical therapists already do and the use of telehealth will allow patients to have improved access to physical therapists and other health care providers.

In summary, telehealth is the future of health care and will be able to provide much needed care for the residents of Kansas, especially in rural and underserved areas. In addition, due to an individual's disability, transportation can be a barrier in accessing our services as many of our patients are dependent on caregivers to take them to their medical appointments. Physical therapists, as well as other providers, in Kansas are already providing care to our residents and being able to utilize telehealth will allow us to reach more residents and provide more readily available access to needed health care providers.

Thank you very much for permitting me to testify.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Westerberg Caswell, PT, DPT