

**Pennsylvania House Professional Licensure Committee
Public Hearing on Senate Bill 780 - The Telemedicine Act
September 12, 2018**

Testimony of the Pennsylvania Physical Therapy Association

As President of the Pennsylvania Physical Therapy Association (PPTA), I would like to state our support for Senate Bill 780 - The Telemedicine Act (SB 780). The PPTA is a member organization representing over 3200 physical therapists and physical therapist assistants in the Commonwealth. Telemedicine has become a more accepted form of healthcare delivery and the ability to provide care for patients by a physical therapist can also be supported with telemedicine services. I would respectfully request that this testimony be included as part of the official record of the House Professional Licensure Committee Public Hearing of September 12, 2018.

SB 780 is of interest to the PPTA and its members in that telemedicine has the potential to lower barriers to access for patients not only in rural areas but all areas of the Commonwealth. In addition, telemedicine can create efficiencies for care delivery and extend the reach of providers, like physical therapists, to patients who have a difficult time coming to a clinic to receive therapy services. Physical therapy is a recognized non-pharmacologic resource for pain management and management of many other conditions. Given the current state of the opioid crisis in our Commonwealth, access to non-pharmacology services is vital for many patients who are suffering in pain and not feeling well on opioids. Telemedicine has been shown to reduce cost and burden to the patient. As Pennsylvania is considering this bill which would define the telemedicine services and included providers, an example of successful telemedicine services has been with the Veterans Administration (VA) healthcare services. The VA has successfully been using telemedicine to provide care for their patients.

PPTA is supportive of telemedicine as therapists across the Commonwealth would be able to access technology to remotely provide skilled services where indicated on the case evaluation. PPTA is supportive of the concept that telemedicine would not expand the scope of practice of any individual but rather would enhance the ability to use the skills of the therapist within the licensure laws to provide care by using available technology. In a recent Cochrane review of 93 randomized controlled trials (RCTs), which is the gold standard of research, telemedicine produced similar or better outcomes for patient care provided appropriate patient selection occurred. While it is not anticipated this technology based health service will replace face-to-face interactions, there is potential for telemedicine services to enhance our reach across the Commonwealth in many instances including but not limited to: older individuals with limited ability to access clinical sites for therapy services; those with disability who are unable to easily travel to therapy sessions; those who need family training within their environment; and those who prefer to use technology to receive skilled services.

SB 780 provides good definitions of telemedicine and holds accountable the healthcare provider to practice within his or her scope of practice, to involve the patient in the decision of technology use, to uphold the same standards of care in using telemedicine, and importantly provides payment for qualified healthcare providers who use commonly available technology for the benefit of patients. Thank you for providing the PPTA the opportunity to provide testimony for regarding this legislation. Please do not hesitate to contact us directly should you have any questions regarding the PPTA's position on SB 780.

Very truly yours,

PENNSYLVANIA PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

By: /s/ Colleen Chancler
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