

April 28th, 2021

Dear Chair Deb Patterson, Vice-Chair Knopp, and members of the Senate Committee on Healthcare,

My name is Kelly Brown and I'm a resident of Portland, Oregon. I'm writing today to testify in support of House Bill 2508, because Oregonians like me need full coverage of telehealth services. HB 2508A comprehensively updates Oregon's telehealth statutes for physical, behavioral, and oral health and outlines coverage requirements for public and private insurance. HB 2508A clarifies that telemedicine services— both audio-only and video conferencing—should be covered and reimbursed at the same scope and level as in-person visits. Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth has proven to be an essential means of accessing healthcare that we need to expand through continued state investment.

Early on in the pandemic, I experienced a very intense headache. I get migraines, but this headache felt different, and I was scared. Under normal circumstances, I would have gone to my doctor's office or urgent care, but because of the pandemic, that seemed even scarier than the headache. I had seen that my healthcare provider was now offering telehealth services. I had never used telehealth before, but I decided to give it a try. I was pleasantly surprised that I could see a doctor that same day. The exam was thorough and the doctor was able to assess my situation and assuage my fears. He confirmed that what I had experienced was indeed a migraine, and that sometimes they present differently as we age. He told me what to watch out for moving forward, and discussed longer term treatment plans like medication as well.

All in all it was a really good experience and I felt a hundred-fifteen times better because I was able to see a doctor without having to go in in person. I cannot overstate the peace of mind this provided me.

The American Hospital Association has concluded that telemedicine "is vital to our health care delivery system, enabling health care providers to connect with patients and consulting practitioners across vast distances," and the American Medical Association "strongly encourages the adoption of telemedicine as a responsible way for physicians to meet anticipated demands for care and treatment."

Since the pandemic started, Delaware, Colorado, Vermont, Maryland, Maine, and other states have already enacted comprehensive telemedicine legislation. With HB 2508A, Oregon has the chance to join these states in passing proactive, future-looking legislation that will take crucial steps toward addressing a serious access issue impacting Oregonians across the state.

Thank you for your consideration,
Kelly Brown
Portland, OR