



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senate Passes Telehealth Bill

CATHARINE YOUNG June 18, 2014

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Bill creates more opportunities for New York patients to use telehealth and telemedicine services

ALBANY – Telehealth and telemedicine have the potential to transform access to healthcare throughout the state, particularly in rural areas where access and availability remain prominent concerns. A bill passed recently in the New York State Senate (S.7852) would improve access to telehealth and telemedicine services for residents throughout the state.

The bill is sponsored by Senator Catharine Young (R, I, C—Olean). It provides patients throughout the state with the ability to utilize telehealth and telemedicine technologies for services that would otherwise only be covered in-person.

Telehealth and telemedicine services are additional resources that provide patients with access to medical expertise otherwise not available in rural areas. They function as complementary services to in-person care.

“Securing coverage for telemedicine services for residents is crucial to the delivery of comprehensive health care in our rural area. We appreciate Senator Young’s strong support for healthcare, and particularly specialty services that residents might not otherwise have access to,” said Ms. Eva Benedict, President/CEO of Jones Memorial Hospital.

As healthcare delivery continues to change with new state and federal requirements, it is vital that the State work with providers to create flexible, innovative models that will improve patient care and maintain quality services throughout New York.

“Telehealth services are extremely beneficial for patients, especially for rural residents who face geographic or economic restrictions that prevent them from traveling long distances for healthcare services. Too often, many patients who face these obstacles choose to go without the healthcare they need,” said Senator Young.

By expanding options for telehealth and telemedicine services, this bill will provide patients with more opportunities to seek the care they need much closer to home. Patients will have greater access to a wide range of healthcare providers and services. They are also less likely to face costly hospitalization, experience better continuity of care, and remain more closely connected to their existing support systems. As demonstrated in recent studies, telehealth and telemedicine services result in better outcomes for patients, and these services provide for greater peace of mind.

“The ability to utilize telehealth and telemedicine increases the likelihood that patients will seek the healthcare they need, thereby avoiding higher medical costs down the road,” said Senator Young.

"Telemedicine is increasingly important in the transformation of the healthcare delivery system – it's a win-win for patients and providers by improving patient care in a convenient and efficient manner, especially in areas experiencing physician shortages," said Mr. Dennis Whalen, President of the Healthcare Association of New York State.

"The use of telemedicine and telehealth services is also an effective way to improve the continuity and coordination of care, while reducing unnecessary hospitalizations and

emergency room visits,” said Mr. Whalen.

“It is important to make good use of the technological advances that will enhance patient outcomes and reduce health costs for everybody in New York State. Passing this bill is a critical step in the process of improving access to quality healthcare, especially in rural areas,” said Senator Young.

The bill has been sent to the Assembly.