



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## Greater Access to Dental Care Now Available Through Teledental Services

CATHARINE YOUNG August 18, 2015

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*Legislation sponsored by Senator Young, signed by Governor Cuomo will improve access for patients*

ALBANY – Greater access to dental care, including increased access to specialists who focus on unique diseases, and faster, more convenient treatment options, will now be available to thousands of New Yorkers.

Gov. Cuomo recently signed **legislation** authored by Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I – Olean) allowing dental offices to serve as provider locations for telehealth services. The expansion offers those in rural communities and those with limited means greater access to medical resources.

“Telehealth has proven effective in providing healthcare coverage to those who may not otherwise have been able to access needed treatment resources,” said Senator Young.

“Patients, especially those who live in rural communities like the ones I represent, need more

cost-effective programs that provide wide-ranging medical and dental care. Incorporating teledental services into a dental professional's array of treatment options will allow them to better provide for their patients, and encourage more people to seek care for dental medical issues."

Including teledental care into the list of available telehealth services will allow patients greater flexibility in accessing needed dental coverage. The new law clarifies that teledental care prescribed at a dental office is a reimbursable form of medical coverage under Medicaid, thus ensuring that patients who would otherwise be entitled to receive the same coverage through in-person services will now be permitted to receive care through the use of telehealth technologies.

Telehealth, which uses two-way video technology to monitor a patient's care and condition, has been heralded by numerous medical professionals as an important step in providing greater health care coverage. The practice incorporates modern technological advancements into health care, reducing travel cost, lost work time, and other expenses incurred by patients.

"Reducing patient cost and treatment time should be the aim of all public health policies. When those with limited means go without needed treatments, it costs everyone more in the long run. We've already seen the success of blending developing technology into other forms of medical care, and teledental care will continue this progress," Senator Young said.

The State's Dental Health Bureau recently concluded a study that found the number of dentists in New York declined from 16,872 in 1997 to 15,291 in 2006, and that an additional 371 dentists would be needed to meet current demands.

To provide additional assistance to the rural communities she represents, Senator Young successfully secured \$500,000 in this year's state budget to support two programs that are currently being used to address the ongoing shortage of dental care in rural areas of New York State. The Rural Dentistry Pilot Program was funded at \$250,000 to provide mobile dental services to children in the rural communities that make up Allegany, Cattaraugus, and Chautauqua Counties. The New York State Dental Association also received \$250,000 to fund a rural dental demonstration program that will provide free dental services for at-risk populations by sponsoring several free dental clinics in Federally Qualified Health Centers located in different rural areas of New York State.