

January 14, 2020

Chair Annette Cleveland
Ranking Member Steve O'Ban
Washington State Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee
435A J.A. Cherberg Bldg.
P.O. Box 40466,
Olympia, WA 98504-0466

RE: Review of Ocular Telemedicine by Telemedicine Collaborative and SB 5759

Dear Chair Cleveland and Ranking Member O'Ban:

Last year, medical professionals, community leaders, academics, think tanks, concerned citizens, companies and advocacy organizations from across Washington State and nationally, joined together in opposition of SB 5759. Representing millions of contact lens and glasses consumers, these interested parties spoke out against this legislation which would have banned ocular telemedicine in Washington State—preventing patients from getting their contact lens and glasses prescriptions renewed online and from having the ability to get online vision checks. We strongly believe that Washington State residents deserve the latest eye-care technologies which have the ability to increase access and lower costs. We urge you to resist attempts to ban telemedicine in this year's legislative session, as the Washington State Telemedicine Collaborative (Collaborative) reviews the issue and develops a recommendation for how best to regulate these technologies.

As a reminder, SB 5759 came before your Committee last year, and after members listened to concerns, ultimately did not vote to move the bill. Instead, Committee members agreed on language to direct the Collaborative to examine the issue of ocular telemedicine, language that passed out of both the Committee and the Senate in SB 5358. While SB 5358 failed to pass both chambers of the Washington Legislature, the Collaborative has decided to review the issue of ocular telemedicine during 2020, and has placed it on the agenda for their January 23, 2020 meeting to begin this review.

As you will recall, the Legislature created the Collaborative in 2015 through the adoption of SB 6519, sponsored by Chair Cleveland and Senator Becker. As directed in the language of SB 6519, the Collaborative's mission is to enhance the understanding and use of health services provided through telehealth and other similar models in Washington state.

It is further charged with developing recommendations to improve reimbursement and access to services, including originating site restrictions, provider to provider consultative models, and technologies and models of care not currently reimbursed; identify the existence of telehealth best

practices, guidelines, billing requirements, and fraud prevention developed by recognized medical and telehealth organizations; and explore other priorities identified by members of the collaborative. The goal of the collaborative is to explore and make telehealth technology recommendations, and their professional guidance is vital before any decision on ocular telehealth is made.

We support having the Collaborative review this issue during 2020, and respectfully request that the Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee delay any action on ocular telemedicine legislation until the review is complete and recommendations are made to the Legislature. We strongly believe that Washington State legislators and citizens will benefit from having telemedicine experts review all the facts and make professional recommendations that promote the interests of patients and the appropriate use of telemedicine technologies. We urge you to reject premature efforts to limit or regulate telemedicine and online prescription renewal for contact lenses and glasses until this review is complete.

Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely,



cc: Members, Senate Health & Long-Term Care Committee