



TelehealthAlliance of Oklahoma

May 5, 2017

Governor Mary Fallin
2300 N. Lincoln Blvd, Room 212
Oklahoma City, 73105

We request the Governor Veto SB 726 as it presents a risk to patient safety and the practice of quality medicine.

Background:

The Telehealth Alliance of Oklahoma, Inc.(TAO) is made up of a wide variety of health organizations and individuals across the states that are interested in telehealth as a means of improving health in the state. Our purpose is to educate and provide technical assistance to health care providers as a means of reducing service barriers to the underserved and/or those living in rural Oklahoma.

TAO also promotes the adoption and implementation of Telemedicine in the state of Oklahoma. In reviewing legislation and policy we use the federal definition of telemedicine:

"Telemedicine" means the practice of health care delivery, diagnosis, consultation, evaluation, and treatment, transfer of medical data, or exchange of medical education information by means of two-way, real-time interactive communication between the patient and physician. To be considered telemedicine the patient must be able to communicate in real-time with the offsite physician at the time the services are provided. Telemedicine is not a consultation provided by telephone, audio-only communication, e-mail, text or instant messaging conversation, website based questionnaire, non-secure video conference or facsimile machine.

Several of our Board members were part of the discussion with bill authors regarding SB 726. All of our members - physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses and other allied health professionals - adhere to evidence-based care guidelines and protocols to ensure quality patient care. Without video, it is impossible to provide urgent primary care to patients who are being seen for the first time by one of our health care professionals.



Physical exam is dependent on visual inspection, which cannot be conducted by telephone only. There is a major distinction between audio only and audio plus video. If audio only, the health provider could miss the following: level of distress of patient; anatomic malformations, motor skills of the patient; visual inspection of the patient; and accuracy of patient identity

Governor Fallin is requested to veto SB 726:

SB 726 allows for loop holes in the newly proposed language for audio (telephone only) only to be used as a modality for telemedicine for the initial encounter, which is not telemedicine. Telephone only will significantly lower the standard of care and is not representative of evidence-based medicine. Appropriate medical care and treatment depend on an accurate diagnosis and history of the patient. Ramifications could be life and death for Oklahomans who place trust in their care providers. Please veto SB 726.

Sincerely,

Dawn Watson

Dawn Watson
Executive Director of the Telehealth Alliance of Oklahoma