

HB001, 3rd Reading, Amendment #45 – Talking Points

Amendment #45 directs \$750,000 to the Department of Health to provide grants to healthcare providers statewide for the development and expansion of telehealth. This would apply to hospitals, physician clinics, advance nurse practitioner clinics, federally qualified health centers and other health providers. It is a one-time appropriation.

The broad definition of telehealth is the use of electronic media to link patients with health professionals in different locations. This means that the patient must be able to see and interact with the off-site physician (provider) at the time the services are provided via telehealth technology.

The recently released Wyoming Government Efficiency report prepared by Alvarez & Marshal recommended the state establish processes to expand the amount of services that are provided via telehealth in the Department of Health section (page 71). The report goes on to suggest telehealth usage for evaluations and management of care, psychiatric services and remote patient monitoring.

There is very limited use of telehealth in Wyoming currently. While *the Wyoming Medicaid program* has been the leader in the state in the use of telehealth and reimbursement for it, health care providers throughout Wyoming still need to invest in the latest technology and to build the connections with providers around the state. And, insurance companies need to expand payment for these services. These grants will help break barriers to care in Wyoming.

The technology platforms continue to advance for both the providers who will see the patients and those who are receiving care. This has been a barrier to advancement of telehealth in Wyoming.

For example, there are now what's called "peripheral" devices that the remote provider can use to receive diagnostic information for clinic assessments. Examples are remote stethoscopes to hear the heart and the remote otoscopes to look in ears.

Chronic care, pediatrics, stroke, behavioral health, infectious disease and urgent care are the main clinic uses of telehealth. The goal would be to expand these services wherever possible throughout the State.

This appropriation is designed as a one-time limited grant program to encourage use telehealth in our State. We talk about losing care to out of state providers, and this may be a partial solution to keep some types of care in the state.