



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senate Passes Legislation to Increase Access to Quality Healthcare

CATHARINE YOUNG June 11, 2012

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ALBANY – Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I - 57th District) announced today that the Senate passed legislation that will increase the access to quality healthcare through technological advancements for rural patients throughout the state.

The bill also passed the state Assembly and will be sent to Governor Cuomo for signature. The legislation amends the public health law, and grants hospital privileges to providers of telemedicine services by allowing for the credentialing of health care professionals offering the services.

“The changes proposed to New York’s law would be more consistent with federal rules by removing an unnecessary regulatory obstacle that prevents small, rural hospitals from offering beneficial services like telemedicine,” Senator Young said.

“This bill also improves cost-effective access to patient care by removing an impediment for rural hospitals that do not have the access to specialists because of their remote location or lack of resources. Patients will have access to the most skilled physicians, and hospitals will be able to combine innovative technology with providing high quality care,” she said.

“Often, telehealth is used when the patient’s hospital does not have a local physician in the

specialty area the patient needs. The Department of Health's interpretation of the law requires the patient's hospital to have a healthcare provider in the same specialty conduct a peer review of the consulting physician's treatment of patients at the patient's hospital," Senator Young said.

"Because the patient's hospital does not have a physician in the same speciality it is very difficult and adds an additional cost for the patient's hospital to comply with this requirement. This bill will permit the patient site hospital to rely on both credentialing and quality assurance program peer review information that has been performed at the distant hospital site where the consulting physician is located," she added.

At a roundtable discussion, "Telemedicine and Telehealth: Putting the Pieces Together," which was held in January, Senator Young worked with the Bipartisan Joint Commission on Rural Resources and the Senate and Assembly Committees on Health and Insurance to evaluate the benefits and impediments of a Statewide telemedicine and telehealth network.

Fred Heigel, Vice President Health System Redesign and Regulatory Affairs and Rural Health, said, "Across New York and the United States, providers are turning to telemedicine to care for patients who may have limited access to care whether due to geographic factors, practitioner shortages or patients' own physical limitations."

"This bill puts the state on a path to a more comprehensive approach that will extend the reach of limited physician resources and allow patients to access care regardless of where they live. It also makes a great step to better facilitating cost-effective access to healthcare by addressing administrative barriers to the expansion of telemedicine," he added.

Proven telehealth groups exist throughout the country, including Western New York Rural

Broadband Health Network (WNYRBHN), Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization (FDRHPO), North Country Telemedicine Project, California Telemedicine and eHealth Center (CTEC), and Georgia Partnership for TeleHealth (GPT).

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