



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## Telehealth Services Will Improve Healthcare Coverage For The Most Needy Of Patients

CATHARINE YOUNG January 8, 2015

| ISSUE: **HEALTH**

*Legislation Sponsored by Senator Young Will Boost Patients Access to Healthcare*

ALBANY – Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I- Olean) announced today that Governor Andrew Cuomo signed legislation she sponsored to increase access to healthcare programs for rural communities, those with limited means, and patients suffering from chronic conditions.

Telehealth provides patients with greater access to providers, especially specialists who focus on unique diseases; creates faster, more convenient treatments for patients; and reduces cost by limiting loss of work time and travel requirements through the use of two-way video technology to communicate between healthcare professionals and patients. The practice is especially noted for allowing patients whose chronic conditions require frequent updates to receive reliable remote care. The program also provides patients who suffer from conditions that may be rare or difficult to treat the opportunity to receive consultations from specialists in the field who are located outside the patients' coverage radius or travel ability.

Under the legislation drafted by Senator Young, telehealth services will now be classified as a reimbursable form of medical coverage, thus ensuring that patients, who would otherwise be entitled to receive the same coverage through in-person based monitoring or consulting services, will now be entitled to receive their necessary care through the use of remote monitoring and other telehealth technologies.

“Providing patients, especially those in rural communities or those with limited means, with the best medical care available through a more cost-effective program should be the aim of all public health policies. Telehealth has long been proven effective and will ultimately encourage patients to avail themselves of all treatments and resources possible. The program will also offer healthcare providers the opportunity to expand their ability to care for patients and provide life sustaining medical coverage at an affordable cost. The practice has already been proven effective in more than 20 states as a means of treatment for numerous diseases and chronic conditions, like cardiac monitoring and more. Its introduction in New York will help ensure our residents are able to live longer, healthier lives in their homes, surrounded by their friends and family,” said Senator Young.

“Under this new law, many individuals who would have otherwise only been able to receive coverage through in-person consultations with a healthcare provider will now be able to receive the same care and supervision through the use of remote monitoring and telemedicine. Removing the financial burdens of travel, lost work time, and more by requiring private insurance and Medicaid to cover telemedicine will be a net positive for

patients, doctors, and taxpayers. The program will also allow healthcare providers better monitoring of their patients' conditions without negatively impacting the patient-provider relationship. Developing technology already provides a positive impact on many different aspects of our day-to-day lives, and incorporating this latest form of medical care into the available resources for those with chronic conditions, the elderly, and others will truly be a blessing for all involved," Senator Young continued.

Telehealth services are supported by numerous organizations in the healthcare field, including the Healthcare Association of New York State (HANYS) and Iroquois Healthcare Alliance.

HANYS President Dennis Whalen said, "Telehealth services will allow patients across the state to access the care they need through modern technology, in an easier and cost effective manner. It will especially help patients in rural and underserved communities to receive essential care. This HANYS-supported legislation will help link providers to patients, improve the health of New Yorkers, and support the tremendous transformation underway in healthcare delivery. HANYS extends its thanks to all the sponsors and supporters of this legislation, and Senator Young and Assemblywoman Addie Russell for their leadership on this issue."

"Given the significant number of rural communities across Upstate New York, we applaud the telehealth bill, and appreciate the efforts of Senator Young," stated Gary J. Fitzgerald, President and CEO of the Iroquois Healthcare Alliance which represents 54 hospitals and

health systems across 32 counties. “Telehealth will improve health outcomes as patients can be diagnosed and treated earlier, and will allow rural patients to stay in their local communities and not travel long distances for their care. Additionally, access to specialists and other healthcare providers increases as these providers are able to expand their reach through telemedicine, which is critically important given the physician shortage.”