



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Telehealth Services To Expand To Include Dental Care

CATHARINE YOUNG June 16, 2015

| ISSUE: **FINANCE, HEALTH, HEALTH CARE, BUDGET**

Legislation Sponsored by Senator Young Will Boost Patients Access to Needed Dental Services

ALBANY – New Yorkers, especially those who live in rural communities, will soon have greater access to medical care, especially specialists who focus on unique diseases, and faster, more convenient treatment options. Under the new **legislation**, authored by Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I – Olean), telehealth services, which were opened earlier this year in New York, will now be expanded to include dental healthcare professionals.

Telehealth, which was signed into law earlier this year and has been heralded as an important step in providing greater healthcare coverage for those with limited means, provides healthcare treatment through the use of two-way video technology to communicate between healthcare professionals and patients.

“Providing patients, particularly those in rural communities like the ones I represent, with the best medical care available through a more cost-effective program should be the aim of

all public health policies. Telehealth has already proven effective in just the few short months since it was implemented. The addition of teledental care will encourage patients, such as those with limited means, to avail themselves of all dental treatments and resources possible. The program will also offer dentists the ability to expand their treatment options and provide important medical coverage that could mean the difference between life and death,” said Senator Young.

The new legislation will allow teledental care to be included in telehealth services, which are now classified as a reimbursable form of medical coverage under Medicaid. This would ensure 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.

“Many individuals who have only been able to receive coverage through in-person consultations at a dentist office will now be able to receive needed care and supervision through the use of remote monitoring and telemedicine. The program will also allow dentists to better monitor their patients’ conditions without providing a negative financial impact on their patients,” continued Senator Young. “We’ve already seen the success of incorporating developing technology into other forms of medical care, and teledental care will provide greater resources for those with chronic conditions, the elderly, and others.”

Telehealth services were initially signed into law by Gov. Cuomo in March, following Senator Young’s advocacy and guidance in the Legislature.

The program allows healthcare providers to better monitor their patients' conditions without negatively impacting the patient-provider relationship through the use of developing technology. The practice has already been proven effective in more than 20 states as a means of treatment for numerous diseases and chronic conditions, such as cardiac monitoring. With new technology being used with a positive impact on many different aspects of our day-to-day lives, the incorporation of telehealth services provides another positive form of medical care into a physician's available resources.

A study coordinated by the DOH's Bureau of Dental Health found that the state's number of dentist declined from 16,872 in 1997 to 15,291 in 2006 and that an additional 371 dentists would be needed to meet current demands. As a result, Senator Young also guided passage of **legislation** authorizing dentists to be added to the extremely successful "Doctors Across New York" program, opening greater dental services up to underserved areas of the state by enabling dentists to be recruited and receive financial incentives to work in communities that currently lack dentists.

In this year's state budget, Senator Young successfully secured \$500,000 to support two programs that are currently being used to address the ongoing shortage of dental care in rural areas of New York State. The Rural Dentistry Pilot Program was funded at \$250,000 to provide mobile dental services to children in the rural communities that make up Allegany, Cattaraugus, and Chautauqua Counties. New York State Dental Association also received \$250,000 to fund a rural dental demonstration program that will provide free dental services for at-risk populations by sponsoring two free dental clinics per year in four or five Federally

Qualified Health Centers located in different rural areas of New York State.