

Support for Senate Bill 780 P.N. 1709

The National Association of Social Workers, Pennsylvania Chapter (NASW-PA) supports Senate Bill 780 and commends Senator Elder Vogel, Jr. for introducing this important piece of legislation. Senate Bill 780 would allow various licensed health care providers to practice telemedicine within the Commonwealth.

Technology has changed the world immensely in the last thirty years, and it is now possible for health care providers to provide care and treatment in ways that were not feasible in the past. Telemedicine is a useful tool that can provide important benefits to patients, including: increased access to health care, expanded utilization of specialty expertise, rapid availability of patient records, and potential reductions in the cost of patient care.

Telemedicine can aid communities traditionally underserved – those in remote or rural areas with few health services and staff – because it overcomes distance and time barriers between health-care providers and patients. The internet and smartphones allow providers to have real-time conversations with patients more easily than ever before. Senate Bill 780 would increase access to health care and potentially reduce costs.

Senate Bill 780 would provide for regulations regarding the use of telemedicine, ensuring that the practice is held to the standards that the Commonwealth deserves. These regulations would ensure that confidential information is protected and verify each instance of telemedicine being provided.

NASW-PA supports many elements of this legislation; among which are its advocacy for the efficiency and efficacy of technology, its promotion of informing patients about telemedicine and clearly stating their rights, and its protection of patient information. As social workers, we should always look to ease the burden that patients bear when receiving services; and Senate Bill 780 is a step in that direction.

The National Association of Social Workers is the largest membership organization for professional social workers, serving 132,000. In Pennsylvania alone, NASW-PA represents nearly 5,000 members and works to enhance the professional growth and development of social workers, to create and maintain social work standards, and to advance sound social policies.