

Testimony Before the Michigan House of Representatives Rules and Competitiveness Committee Regarding HB 5804: Veterinary Medicine



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Mr. Chair and committee members, my name is Vittorio Nastasi, and I am a Policy Analyst with the Reason Foundation. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments today.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the ability of telehealth to promote access to quality care without the need for in-person visits. Unfortunately, laws and regulations often fail to keep pace with technological innovation. A recent report published by Reason Foundation reviewed telehealth policies in all 50 states and found significant room for improvement.

However, one area where nearly all states received top marks was the ability to establish a patient-provider relationship via telehealth. According to our analysis, only three states require an in-person visit before human patients can receive telehealth services. Michigan is among the 47 states without such restrictions.

Last year, the Michigan Board of Veterinary Medicine finalized rules authorizing telehealth without requiring a previous in-person visit. This approach makes sense and affords animal owners flexibility and convenience.

In most cases, it makes more sense for a patient and provider to meet first over telehealth to determine if an in-person visit is necessary. In such cases, requiring an in-person visit prior to the provision of telehealth services is both unnecessary and inefficient. Burdensome in-person requirements are most costly for rural pet owners and people without reliable access to transportation.

HB 5804 would codify the progress made by the Board of Veterinary Medicine last year into law. This would ensure owners have convenient and affordable access to care for their pets.

As with human medicine, telehealth cannot and should not replace in-person care. However, telehealth is a safe, efficient, and cost-effective option for many veterinary needs. State law should therefore promote access to care by embracing the benefits of technological innovations like telehealth.

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