

To: Members of the Senate Health Policy Committee
From: Chris Mitchell, Senior Vice President, Advocacy
Paige Fults, Director, Advocacy
Date: March 7, 2017
Re: Senate Bill 213 – Telehealth Fix
Position: Support

The Michigan Health and Hospital Association (MHA) supports Senate Bill (SB) 213, sponsored by Senator Pete MacGregor (R-Rockford), which corrects an unintended consequence of Public Act 359 of 2016. As signed into law, PA 359 restricts providers from prescribing controlled substances through telehealth services.

If this provision of PA 359 takes effect on March 29, mental health clinicians will be barred from providing critically needed care for people with the most limited access to mental health services. Telehealth improves access to care for people who live in remote areas and enhances psychological services by allowing psychiatrists to support clients between visits and prescribe prescriptions. It removes barriers such as cost, transportation and time constraints which often prevent people from seeking mental health services. Telehealth also protects the privacy of patients suffering from mental illness who feel embarrassed or stigmatized about making contact with a therapist.

The impact of PA 359 which disallows clinicians who are seeing patients via telehealth from prescribing controlled substances must be reversed. **The MHA strongly believes this bill will ensure access to care and medication needed by the mental health patients. Therefore we urge you to support SB 213.**

Please contact Paige Fults (pfults@mha.org) at (517) 703-8616 at the MHA if you have further questions regarding SB 213.

Brian Peters, Chief Executive Officer