

Health and Human Services Committee

LB 282

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Calder, Lynch

Director, Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care

Department of Health and Human Services

Good afternoon, Senator Riepe, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Calder Lynch (C-A-L-D-E-R L-Y-N-C-H) and I am the Director of the Division of Medicaid and Long Term Care in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). I am here to testify in support of LB 282 introduced by Senator Merv Riepe, a bill that changes provisions relating to telehealth services.

Telehealth is an important tool for Nebraska Medicaid in ensuring the delivery of services to all our clients. As you are aware, areas of our state - especially in greater Nebraska - lack certain specialists. We have particular challenges among behavioral health providers. Telehealth allows patients to receive services that they otherwise would be unable to in their local community. Patients having easy access to health services, regardless of their location, removes obstacles that they might face when it comes to accessing care. Telehealth allows for earlier interventions preventing later more costly and health-threatening conditions.

After the passage of LB 1076 in 2014, Nebraska Medicaid promulgated regulations to allow greater access to services in Nebraska through telehealth. These regulations allow Medicaid to reimburse for more services delivered by telehealth through our Heritage Health plans. While the distance limitation regarding the delivery of behavioral health services to children through telehealth was not repealed in the final version of LB 1076, Nebraska Medicaid proactively removed it from our regulations anticipating that the legislature would later remove it from statute, as proposed by LB 282. Repealing the distance limits will give equal access to care to all Medicaid members.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in support of LB 282. I would like to thank Senator Riepe for introducing this bill. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.