

TO: The House Health Care Committee
FR: Tiffany Kettermann, MA, MPA, LPC, LMHC, CADCI
COPACT Member At-large
DA: 2/9/20
RE: House Bill 4101



Chair Salinas and Members of the Committee:

The Coalition of Professional Associations of Counselors and Therapists (COPACT) advocates for the 6000 Licensed Professional Counselors, Marriage and Family Therapists, and Registered Interns in Oregon. Our professions collectively work with over 100,000 Oregonians every week through our work in agencies, universities, hospitals, rehabilitation, health clinics, corrections, and private practice across the state.

COPACT asks your support for HB 4101 and urges the committee to consider the following points in support of this bill.

Efficacy of telemedicine is research based

Telemedicine is well researched. The American Telemedicine Association has compiled 40 years of research and thousands of citations. These studies show that access to telemedicine services across health care disciplines is yielding improved access to services, reductions in healthcare costs, better patient engagement, better healthcare quality, a reduction in no-shows, improved healthcare provider satisfaction. Additionally, these services are meeting demands in a changing healthcare landscape which favorably views telemedicine, particularly among younger users.

Users benefit from telemedicine for behavioral health. The US Department of Health and Human Services (Telehealth, 2016) published a report on research conducted by the Pacific Northwest Evidence-based Practice Center. Researchers compiled 1,491 citations about telehealth services. They reported “telehealth interventions produce positive outcomes when used for ...psychotherapy as part of behavioral health.”

Industry norms

The America Hospital Association (2019) reports that almost every state in the US covers some form of telemedicine for Medicaid services, however behavioral health telemedicine has not been covered in Oregon for OHP clients. The majority of private insurance panels in Oregon (for example, Optum, United Behavioral Health, Moda, and Pacificsource) already provide reimbursement for behavioral health telemedicine services, recognizing it as an important and efficient means of providing support to clients. This trend continues to grow. Meanwhile, Oregon Health Plan members have not been able to access telemedicine. This creates disparity in access to services between users of public and private insurance and impacts those that are most vulnerable.

Expanded access for rural and limited service areas.

COPACT supports improving access to care for consumers of behavioral health services in Oregon, particularly those on the Oregon Health Plan. COPACT views the addition of teletherapy services as a tool that will expand access to care, especially for clients most impacted by lack of access—those in rural and limited service areas. These are areas we know to be impacted most heavily by the lack of access. With telemedicine in place, users in limited access areas will be able to reach a wider array of providers statewide. Indeed, a 2014 Rand study showed that telemedicine expanded access to patients who did not have prior access to a provider. Further, clients facing problems with transportation, childcare, and other barriers in accessing counseling sessions will find barriers removed with the addition of teletherapy. No shows may also be ameliorated.

COPACT urges you to support HB 4101.

Thank you for this opportunity to stand in favor of something we believe will have a positive impact on the citizens of our state.

If you wish more information concerning the information included in this letter, please consult:

Mapping the Evidence for Patient Outcomes, Systematic Reviews, June 2016

Analysis of Teladoc Use Seems to Indicate Expanded Access to Care for Patients Without Prior Connection to a Provider, Rand 2014