



SENATOR CHARLES SCHWERTNER, MD
SENATE DISTRICT 5

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Schwertner Unveils Long-Awaited Deal on Telemedicine

In a negotiated agreement, SB 1107 creates a framework for telemedical services that promises to increase access to care, preserve care standards, and ensure patient safety.

AUSTIN, TX -- This morning, Senator Charles Schwertner (R-Georgetown) announced the filing of Senate Bill 1107, legislation that would provide a clear and accountable regulatory structure for the operation of telemedical services in Texas. The term "telemedicine" generally refers to healthcare service providers that utilize novel telecommunications or internet-based technology to diagnose and treat patients remotely.

"Texas is a state that prides itself on embracing new technologies and pushing the envelope on innovation," said Schwertner, who leads the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services. "SB 1107 will give Texans the opportunity to access a new, state-of-the-art option for their medical care, while also protecting patient safety and ensuring the accepted standard of care is maintained."

After months of negotiations between provider groups and the burgeoning telehealth industry, SB 1107 ultimately emerged as an agreed solution for regulating the practice of medicine in circumstances where a patient is not physically present -- a key point of contention which had long set the groups at odds with one another. In today's filing, Senator Schwertner announced that SB 1107 carries the support of Teledoc, the Texas Medical Association (TMA), the Texas Association of Family Physicians (TAFP), and the e-Health Alliance, a group which represents a host of other telehealth companies.

SB 1107 also establishes a clear definition of telemedicine in state law and clarifies that the same standard of care that would apply in a traditional, in-person setting also applies to telemedical services. The bill would allow practitioners to interact with patients through a real-time audiovisual interaction, or through an asynchronous "store and forward" process that includes clinically relevant diagnostic imagery as well as the patient's relevant medical history, laboratory results, and prescriptive history.

"If done properly, I believe telemedicine holds remarkable promise for expanding access to primary and specialty care in Texas, particularly in the rural communities of our state that lack a sufficient provider base," added Schwertner. "I'm thankful to the senators, stakeholders, and staff members who worked so diligently to reach this agreement."

A medical doctor by training, Dr. Schwertner serves as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services. Schwertner is currently serving his third term as the senator for Senate District 5, a ten-county region of central and east Texas.

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