



# **ERIC** The ERISA Industry Committee

*The Only National Association Advocating Solely for the Employee Benefit and Compensation Interests of America's Largest Employers*

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## **WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF THE ERISA INDUSTRY COMMITTEE (ERIC) REGARDING TELEMEDICINE**

### **BEFORE THE HOUSE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE**

February 10, 2016

On behalf of The ERISA Industry Committee (ERIC), thank you for inviting testimony from interested stakeholders as you explore opportunities to expand and improve the delivery of health care through telemedicine in Texas. ERIC speaks in one voice for our members – the country's largest employers – on their benefit and compensation interests, including many members with employees and retirees in Texas.

As plan sponsors, our members strive to provide the best health care possible to their employees, retirees, and families at affordable costs. At ERIC, we seek to enhance our members' ability to provide high-quality, affordable health care. We recognize the significant opportunity provided by telemedicine to modernize health care delivery and improve access to quality medical care for workers, retirees, and their families.

ERIC members want their employees to have the care they need – when and how they need it. Telemedicine offers many unique benefits that are appreciated by employees, retirees, and their families because it provides:

- **Accessibility. Flexibility. Without barriers.** Telemedicine allows employees and their families to gain access to health care 24 hours a day, seven days a week, whether at home, in transit, or at work. With telemedicine standard office hours and proximity to a doctor are no longer barriers to needed care.
- **Benefits for rural, urban, and working families.** Telemedicine has long been seen as a means for providing access to care for rural populations, but the impact of the virtual service doesn't stop there. Urban underserved populations, retirees, disabled employees, and those with language barriers also stand to benefit from increased access to care, as well as working parents, caregivers, and others struggling to balance work and family demands. Using telemedicine to remotely monitor health conditions is also an important benefit.
- **Increased workforce satisfaction.** The response from employees who have used telemedicine services is very positive. They like the service and want it to continue. Employees want to minimize the time spent attending to their health needs, or that of loved ones, and appreciate the opportunity to reach a health care professional at times and locations that are convenient to them.
- **Connection to workplace clinics, rural health centers and employer wellness initiatives.** Telemedicine services can be tied to employer workplace clinics as well as rural health centers.

And it supports wellness initiatives that employers offer to further employee health and wellbeing.

- **Cost-effective care.** Employees, retirees, and their families need access to health care that they can utilize because it is provided at an affordable, cost-effective rate.

ERIC recognizes the benefits of telemedicine and appreciates the importance of maintaining high-quality care. ERIC believes that the standards governing in-person visits should apply in the same manner to telemedicine visits. In other words, there should not be artificial barriers that unnecessarily limit access to medical services provided through telemedicine when there are existing requirements in place to hold providers to high standards of care.

To achieve a balanced legislative environment for telemedicine, ERIC encourages policymakers to:

- **ADOPT** technology-neutral requirements, permitting use of different types of technology platforms that are designed for telemedicine;
- **ADOPT** licensing policies that facilitate inter-state practice so providers, located in or out of the state, who deliver high-quality care, can serve patients located in the state;
- **AVOID** restrictions that require patients to visit specific locations (e.g., “originating sites”) in order to access telemedicine services;
- **AVOID** imposing additional requirements on providers that offer telemedicine services that are not imposed on in-person visits; and
- **CONSIDER** the needs of patients to have better access to care that can be provided via telemedicine, either through a telemedicine visit or remote monitoring of health conditions.

Thank you for soliciting input from interested stakeholders. ERIC is pleased to represent large employers with the goal of ensuring telemedicine benefits are accessible for millions of workers, retirees, and their families.