

November 17, 2020

The Honorable Bob D. Hackett  
Chairman  
Senate Insurance and Financial Committee  
1 Capitol Sq  
1st Fl  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chairman Hackett:

On behalf of The ERISA Industry Committee (ERIC), thank you for accepting comments from interested stakeholders as the Committee considers House Bill 679. ERIC is the only national association that advocates exclusively for large employers on health, retirement, and compensation public policies at the federal, state, and local levels. We speak in one voice for our member companies on their benefit and compensation interests, including many with employees and retirees in Ohio. ERIC supports and urges passages of H.B. 679.

As plan sponsors, our member companies strive to provide the best health care possible to their employees, retirees, and families at an affordable cost. At ERIC, we seek to enhance our members' ability to provide high-quality, affordable health care, and we recognize the significant opportunity telemedicine has to modernize health care delivery and improve access to quality medical care for workers and their dependents. Telemedicine minimizes the time spent attending a health care provider visit, making telehealth a great value to working parents, caregivers, and others struggling to balance work and family demands. It also provides access to care for rural and urban underserved populations, retirees, the elderly, disabled employees, those with language barriers, chronic conditions, or transportation barriers who may otherwise not have access to care.

We applaud Representatives Fraizer and Holmes for introducing H.B. 679 in an effort to expand telehealth at this critical time and thank the bill sponsors for considering and amending H.B. 679 to reflect our recommended changes.

**ERIC and our member companies support passage of H.B. 679, due to the significant improvements made to the bill.**

H.B. 679 now includes highly beneficial policies that are fundamental for telehealth's expansion in Ohio. ERIC believes the following provisions are central to the legislation's passage and we support including them in final legislation:

- The bill no longer mandates private sector reimbursement amounts for telehealth visits to be at the same rate as reimbursement for in-person visits.
- The same informed consent requirements will apply to in-person visits and telehealth visits.
- Telehealth will now be permitted to establish a patient-provider relationship.

- The same standard of care will apply to in-person visits and telehealth visits.
- “*Telehealth services*” is now broadly defined to include synchronous or asynchronous information and technology to connect a provider in one location and a patient in a different location, and
- The legislation does not mandate patients to travel to specific “originating sites” to access telehealth services.

Thank you for accepting our input on H.B. 679; ERIC urges prompt passage of this piece of legislation to immediately help improve patient access to telehealth during the COVID pandemic. ERIC is pleased to represent large employers with the goal of ensuring telemedicine benefits are accessible for millions of workers, retirees, and their families. If you have any questions concerning our written testimony, or if we can be of further assistance, please contact me at [jgelfand@ERIC.org](mailto:jgelfand@ERIC.org) or 202-789-1400.



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