

February 6, 2023

The Honorable Tim Walberg
United States House of Representatives
2266 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Suzan DelBene
United States House of Representatives
2330 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Walberg and DelBene,

On behalf of The ERISA Industry Committee (ERIC), thank you for your leadership in introducing the *Telehealth Benefit Expansion for Workers Act of 2023* (H.R. 824) to allow employers to offer standalone telehealth benefits to all employees, in particular those employees who are not enrolled in the employer's medical plan. We appreciate your leadership in expanding access to telehealth services in the employment-based health coverage market. **With the recent announcement of the end of the public health emergency (PHE), Congress should take up and pass this legislation as soon as possible.**

ERIC is a national nonprofit organization exclusively representing the largest employers in the United States in their capacity as sponsors of employee benefit plans for their nationwide workforces. With member companies that are leaders in every economic sector, ERIC is the voice of large employer plan sponsors on federal, state, and local public policies impacting their ability to sponsor benefit plans.

ERIC member companies are strong supporters of telehealth. Telehealth has not only served as an essential lifeline to care for tens of millions of Americans these past three years, it has forever changed the way Americans access medical care. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Department of Labor temporarily allowed employers to expand standalone telehealth offerings to individuals ineligible for the full medical/surgical benefit. This relief lasts only until the end of the PHE, which is currently scheduled to end on May 11. This change will cause tens of millions of workers and families to lose access to telehealth benefits. Your legislation would make this relief permanent, continuing to provide telehealth to part-time employees, seasonal workers, and many others.

ERIC's large employer member companies have been pioneers in offering robust access to telehealth that enables our beneficiaries to obtain the care they need, when and where they need it, affordably, and conveniently. Telehealth reduces the need to leave home or work and risk infection at a physician's office, and provides a critical solution for individuals with limited mobility or access to transportation, or those who are caring for the elderly or children.

Telehealth has the potential to address provider shortages, especially related to mental and behavioral health, and improve choice and competition in health care. Self-insured employers have been the early adopters and drivers of telehealth expansion, and hope to continue to be leaders in this area. Your legislation will make the difference to ensure that millions more families get access to care.

ERIC enthusiastically supports your legislation as we believe it will increase access to telehealth services, improving health care and patients' lives. We look forward to working with you to secure this critical relief for employees, retirees, and their families before the public health emergency ends.

Sincerely,

