

February 10, 2021

Honorable Deb Patterson
Chair
Senate Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE,
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Patterson,

On behalf of The ERISA Industry Committee (ERIC), thank you for accepting comments from interested stakeholders as the Committee considers Senate Bill 697. 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 Oregon. **ERIC is not in support of SB 697 and asks the Committee to vote down the bill.**

As plan sponsors, our member companies strive to provide the best health care coverage possible to their employees, retirees, and families at an affordable cost. ERIC recognizes 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.

Large employers have been the biggest innovators in health care, and most of them have adopted telemedicine to provide added value for their employees and to help drive down health care costs.

ERIC strongly believes that reimbursement rates for telehealth services should be negotiated between the provider and payer, not mandated by the government. Telehealth enables providers to treat more patients more efficiently, with less overhead cost, less staff needed, and fewer expenses associated with operating brick-and-mortar retail health settings. This has enabled telehealth providers to offer more competitive rates than in-person visits. Losing this successful competitive market would be a significant setback for patients and employers, and ultimately for up-and-coming providers who otherwise could cultivate opportunities in the telehealth space.

Thank you for accepting our input on SB 697. **ERIC strongly urges the Committee to vote NO on SB 697.** 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 sbelmont@eric.org or 202-627-1914.

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