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 SENATE BILL 753

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH POLICY

February 16, 2016

The ERISA Industry Committee (ERIC) is pleased to support Michigan Senate Bill 753 (S. 753) regarding telehealth. S. 753 strikes the right balance of flexibility needed to maximize the benefits of telehealth, while maintaining the needed protections to ensure a high standard of health care in Michigan.

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 Michigan.

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 telehealth 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. Telehealth provides many unique benefits that are appreciated by employees, retirees, and their families because it:

- Increases accessibility to medical care, with the needed flexibility to receive the care 24-hours a day, seven days a week;
- Provides access to care for rural and urban underserved populations, retirees, the elderly, disabled employees, and those with language barriers, chronic conditions, or transportation barriers that may otherwise not have access to care;
- Minimizes the time spent attending to health care needs, while ensuring access to health care professionals at times and locations that are convenient; and
- Allows access to health care that is provided at an affordable, cost-effective rate.

ERIC is pleased that S. 753 considers the needs of patients to have better access to care through the use of telehealth, while recognizing that providers must maintain a high standard of care. ERIC believes that the standards governing in-person visits to ensure patient safety and

quality care should also apply, in the same manner, to telehealth visits. ERIC appreciates that S. 753 recognizes providers' ability to exercise their professional judgment to determine the most appropriate treatment (including referral to in-person treatment, if necessary) on a case-by-case basis, in order to maintain a high standard of care.

ERIC also applauds the technology-neutral definition of telehealth put forth in S. 753 that will permit use of different types of technology platforms designed for delivery of health care services. With innovative technologies emerging every day, limiting the types of technology that may be used to provide telemedicine creates an unnecessary barrier to telehealth services. There are many technology platforms that may be used to provide telehealth services, and patients and providers should be allowed to use different types of technology to give and receive needed care.

ERIC urges the Committee to consider the needs of patients in Michigan that stand to benefit from increased access to telemedicine services, to support S. 753, and to advance this bill out of committee favorably.