

# Support Payment Parity for Telemedicine

## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY

Expand Access to Care with Telemedicine Payment Parity

## PRIORITY

Improve access to high-quality, physician-led telemedicine care that is covered at the same rate as in-person visits.

## BACKGROUND

Telemedicine is a powerful tool to help physicians meet Texans' health care needs. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, telemedicine protected patients' health and safety by eliminating exposure risk from health care settings and reducing delays in access to care. Recognizing the value, physicians and patients alike are eager to continue virtual health care services. But policy must align with opportunity, leaving no room for inconsistent payment, licensing, and regulatory standards that threaten physicians' ability to continue delivering care with telemedicine.

Protecting patients' access to telemedicine helps keep Texans healthy and productive. Telemedicine is statutorily defined as a component of the practice of medicine. Compliance with the Medical Practice Act's licensing and regulatory standards and allowing the Texas Medical Board to enforce them reduces ambiguity for physicians and ensures the highest quality care for patients.

House Bill 4, 87th Texas Legislature, made permanent the telemedicine flexibilities that were established during the pandemic to ensure access to care for Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program enrollees. The legislature should build on that momentum by establishing payment parity for commercial health plan-covered services delivered in person and via telemedicine. Twenty three states have laws requiring private payers to pay at parity for telemedicine visits<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Texas Medical Association HIT Survey, 2023

<sup>2</sup> Center for Connected Health Policy, 2024.



Physicians Caring for Texans



**75% of Texas physicians** use telemedicine for approximately **10% of their patient visits**<sup>1</sup>

## TMA RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Institute payment parity such that covered services provided via telemedicine to a health plan enrollee by a contracted physician are paid at least at the same contracted rate as in-person visits. This ensures continuity of care and honors the patient-physician relationship by allowing patients and their established physicians to determine whether services should be provided in-person or virtually.
- Ensure telemedicine – statutorily defined as the practice of medicine – adheres to the licensing and regulatory standards established by the Medical Practice Act and is enforced by the Texas Medical Board.
- Establish patient protections within virtual-care networks. Strong patient protections are needed within virtual-care networks to ensure patients retain access to timely in person health care when necessary.

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