



December 16, 2020

Senator Cindy F. Friedman
State House, Room 413-D
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Ronald Mariano
State House, Room 343
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Julian Cyr
State House, Room 312-E
Boston, MA 02133

Representative John Mahoney
State House, Room 130
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Dean Tran
State House, Room 504
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Randy Hunt
State House, Room 236
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Honorable Conferees,

I am writing to submit testimony on behalf of the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce regarding proposals related to telemedicine under consideration by the conference committee. One of the Chamber's guiding health care principles is that the state must strike a balance between supporting our cornerstone health care industry and ensuring that world-class care is accessible and affordable for residents and businesses.

Telemedicine coverage presents a significant opportunity to expand access to high quality health care, but Massachusetts – a leader in so many aspects of health care – lags on this issue. In December 2019, before the COVID pandemic and the emergency order to cover telemedicine services, Massachusetts was one of only 12 states without coverage parity.¹ Without action by the Legislature, we risk returning to that pre-COVID status.

The Chamber urges the conference committee to include coverage parity for telemedicine services. As demonstrated during the pandemic, telemedicine provides a lifeline for residents who have limited ability to visit a physical office space because of geographic proximity, access to transportation, availability of child care, or some other reason. Ensuring such services are covered by commercial insurance after the pandemic will improve residents' ability to access care and ultimately create a healthier population that can be more productive and potentially reduce long-term health care costs.

A key issue is whether telemedicine services should also have rate parity with in-person services. The Chamber believes that setting rates is best addressed by the negotiating entities themselves, without government intervention. This position is consistent with the Chamber's view that, in general, government should avoid mandates and laws that restrict organizations' ability to adjust quickly to external forces and changing preferences. We do recognize the need to maintain rate parity during the COVID pandemic, but we urge the conference committee to avoid determining the rates for telehealth services for a longer period of time.

Thank you for your consideration and your thoughtful deliberation on these issues. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James E. Rooney".

James E. Rooney
President and CEO

¹ [50-State Survey of Telehealth Commercial Payer Statutes](#), Foley & Lardner, December 2019