

Claudia Duck Tucker | Teladoc Health Testimony - Public Health Committee

March 15, 2021

Good afternoon Chair Abrams, Chair Steinberg and members of the Committee. My name is Claudia Duck Tucker; I am Senior Vice President of Government Affairs and Public Policy for Teladoc Health. Teladoc Health is a mission driven organization. We are successfully transforming how people access and experience healthcare, with a focus on high quality, lower costs, and improved outcomes around the world. The integrated services from Teladoc Health include telehealth, expert medical services, remote patient monitoring, mental health treatment, and licensable platform services. With more than 2,400 employees, the organization delivers care in 175 countries and in more than 40 languages, partnering with employers, hospitals and health systems, and more than 50 health plans in the U.S. to transform care delivery. Teladoc Health serves more than 40 percent of Fortune 500 employers, as well as thousands of small businesses, labor unions, and public-sector employers, which offer our virtual care services to their employees.

We are very proud of our contribution to healthcare in Connecticut and have a robust presence there; in 2020 we were able to save patients and payors over 6 million dollars; 4400 employers offer the Teladoc Health benefit to their employees; over 450 thousand lives are covered by Teladoc in the state. In addition, we performed over 24,000 consults there in 2020. Our physicians are board certified and Connecticut state licensed to provide care for your residents. Our Connecticut based clients include Yale, Home Depot, Dominion Energy, Costco, Pfizer, CVS and many others. All of these companies have placed their trust in Teladoc Health because they understand the benefit and value that telehealth brings to their employees; with healthcare costs continuing to rise and access to healthcare providers a challenge regardless of your zip code, telehealth is one of the sharpest tools in the toolbox for employers, health plans and your citizens.

Connecticut was an early first adopter of progressive telehealth policy thru statute and I was pleased that Teladoc Health could be a part of those discussion. As we know, technology moves much faster than state legislatures. The use of asynchronous technologies is critical to remote patient monitoring which has been a game changer for patients with diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Done properly, clarifications to the telehealth statutes will ensure that the latest innovations in technology are compliant with Connecticut state law.

Lastly, we encourage language that will allow for expanded access to expert medical second opinion services to the best specialists in the country without incurring the cost and inconvenience of travel. Many states allow for peer to peer consults between a treating physician and a specialist in another state; we seek clarification that this can be done in Connecticut to allow residents access to the best specialists in the country for serious and life-threatening conditions.

We support the work that the Legislature is doing to help increase access to mental health treatment. The ability to use the telephone to expand the reach of mental health services to those who need it is critical. The health care provider shortage is real, however, in many areas getting a in person appointment with a mental health provider is nearly impossible. Sixty percent of US counties have no practicing psychiatrists; as in general medical access, telehealth is able to fill this gap with quality care. Studies have shown that for those with serious mental health issues like PTSD and depression, the use of the telephone, secure email and text is invaluable in establishing a relationship and building trust in order to proceed to either video or in person visits. Rather than be concerned about the modality, we should concentrate on the standard of care. If a provider feels that the standard of care can be upheld using technology, it becomes patient choice and physician discretion.

Thank you and I hope that you will consider Teladoc Health as a continued resource.