



## Telehealth Parity: Leveling the playing field

SB 674 by Sen. Greg McCortney and Rep. Marcus McEntire

*Oklahoma law requires insurers to reimburse for telehealth visits, but it does not require that telehealth be given the same level of access as in-person visits. Provider type restrictions, different review processes and lower payments remain as barriers. SB 674 ensures that medically-appropriate telehealth visits under private insurance are handled and reimbursed the same as their equivalent in-person visits. **If SB 674 is passed, Oklahoma will be one of 10 states with full telehealth parity — making us a national leader in telehealth access.***

### Telehealth is the future, and the future is here

- **COVID proved this works.** Last year, insurers and providers implemented some of the policies captured in SB 674 on an emergency basis to lower barriers to telehealth access. It worked, and telehealth utilization reached an all-time high.
- **Outcomes and costs line up.** Research shows outcomes are the same as in-person visits for medically-appropriate telehealth services, while quicker access to care prevents more expensive visits in the long run and can reduce costs long-term.
- **Maximize patient choice.** Demand is sky-high in a post-COVID world, with a massive increase in patients seeking telehealth services. Unfortunately, many providers are disincentivized to perform telehealth because their reimbursements are less, and some mental health providers, such as therapists, are not guaranteed payments for telehealth.
- **Telehealth parity is a lifeline for rural Oklahoma.** Rural areas have significant shortages of specialty doctors and behavioral health providers, but SB 674 can significantly expand the reach of urban physicians and mental health professionals into rural Oklahoma.
- **Positioning Oklahoma for health tech boom.** Virtual tech is the next frontier for the health care industry — and the U.S. telehealth market is expected to grow by 30% through 2026. As private investors and innovative firms look to expand research and application of telehealth services, Oklahoma can roll out the red carpet for economic growth.

### SB 674 is a negotiated, prudent approach

- **No new mandate.** SB 674 does not mandate new coverage lines; rather, it extends existing COVID-era expansions that have worked here and in other states.
- **Guardrails for fraud.** Thanks to language proposed by the insurance industry, SB 674 would cover only medically-appropriate telehealth as defined by AMA and CMS, and the Health Information Exchange would produce a cost-benefit data report after 1 year.