



## TESTIMONY FOR JOINT LEGISLATIVE BUDGET HEARING ON HEALTH/MEDICAID

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Dear Honorable Finance Chair Senator Krueger, Honorable Ways & Means Chair Assembly Member Weinstein, Senator Rivera, Assemblyman Gottfried and distinguished Members:

My name is Claudia Duck Tucker; I am Senior Vice President of Government Affairs and Public Policy for Teladoc Health. We are pleased to offer our comments regarding telehealth in the proposed New York State FY 2022 budget. As the world's oldest and largest telehealth organization, we have a unique perspective. As a company that is based in New York, we have a personal stake in good public policy for our clients and the citizens of the state. 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.

Located in Purchase, we are proud to be a New York based company and of our contribution to health care in the state. In 2020, we were able to save patients and payors over one hundred

million dollars in health care costs; 6000 employers offer the Teladoc Health benefit to their employees; over five million lives are covered by Teladoc Health in the state. In addition, we performed over 210,000 consults here in 2020. Lastly, we have over 1405 physicians who are board certified and New York State-licensed to provide care for New York residents; of those, 686 are New York residents. Our New York based clients include the City of New York, Citi, IBM, Pfizer, Bank of New York, Cornell University, Bristol-Myers Squibb and more. All these companies and organizations 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 our citizens.

The pandemic has taught us many things. While we all suspected that there were structural weaknesses in our health care system, the last 12 months have shown us how fragmented and fragile our system actually is. It also showed us the impact that telehealth has when people were told to shelter in place and not seek in person medical treatment unless it was an emergency. Governor's and Legislatures all over the country moved quickly to pass emergency legislation that would allow for increased use of telehealth thru licensure waivers to enable companies like Teladoc Health and others to mobilize our networks to shift physicians to hot spots that were changing daily. As such, we strongly support the language in the proposed budget that will:

**...issue regulations for the creation of an interstate licensure program which authorizes practitioners licensed by contiguous states or states in the Northeast region to provide telehealth services.... See Health and Mental Hygiene Article VII Legislation, Part F, page 17, lines 19-23.**

In addition to increased access to care, telehealth also brings savings to the patient, the employers and the health plan. At Teladoc Health we believe that health care providers should be reimbursed fairly, and we do NOT oppose legislation that provides for reimbursement parity for providers that see patients both in

person and virtually. However, we believe that this should exclude companies that only see patients in a telehealth setting without the overhead of a bricks and mortar practice. Telehealth companies should be allowed to continue to provide care to New York patients at a reimbursement rate that is negotiated between the company and employer or health plan.

Teladoc supports efforts to provide for the use of technology to treat patients for medical and mental health purposes. Rather than focus on the type of technology, we urge policy makers to plan for the future. Innovation moves faster than legislation. All decisions made by a health care provider on whether telehealth can be used or what type of technology should be allowed should hinge on one thing and that's whether or not the standard of care can be upheld. Telehealth is the great social equalizer; it removes geographic and socio-economic barriers and allows all citizens, regardless of their zip code to have access to quality health care.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I hope that you will consider Teladoc Health a resource as you review the lessons learned from the pandemic. We stand ready and willing to help in any way possible.