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**ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5385**

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**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2019 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Health & Long Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Becker, Cleveland, Braun, O'Ban, Wilson, L., Brown, Warnick, Zeiger, Bailey, and Van De Wege)

AN ACT Relating to reimbursing for telemedicine services at the same rate as in person; amending RCW 48.43.735, 41.05.700, 74.09.325, and 28B.20.830; and providing an effective date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

**Sec.**  RCW 48.43.735 and 2017 c 219 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

(1)(a) For health plans issued or renewed on or after January 1, 2017, a health carrier shall reimburse a provider for a health care service provided to a covered person through telemedicine or store and forward technology if:

((~~(a)~~)) (i) The plan provides coverage of the health care service when provided in person by the provider;

((~~(b)~~)) (ii) The health care service is medically necessary;

((~~(c)~~)) (iii) The health care service is a service recognized as an essential health benefit under section 1302(b) of the federal patient protection and affordable care act in effect on January 1, 2015; and

((~~(d)~~)) (iv) The health care service is determined to be safely and effectively provided through telemedicine or store and forward technology according to generally accepted health care practices and standards, and the technology used to provide the health care service meets the standards required by state and federal laws governing the privacy and security of protected health information.

(b)(i) Except as provided in (b)(ii) of this subsection, for health plans issued or renewed on or after January 1, 2021, a health carrier shall reimburse a provider for a health care service provided to a covered person through telemedicine at the same rate as if the health care service was provided in person by the provider.

(ii) Hospitals, hospital systems, telemedicine companies, and provider groups consisting of eleven or more providers may elect to negotiate a reimbursement rate for telemedicine services that differs from the reimbursement rate for in-person services.

(iii) For purposes of this subsection (1)(b), the number of providers in a provider group refers to all providers within the group, regardless of a provider's location.

(2)((~~(a) If the service is provided through store and forward technology there must be an associated office visit between the covered person and the referring health care provider. Nothing in this section prohibits the use of telemedicine for the associated office visit.~~

~~(b)~~)) For purposes of this section, reimbursement of store and forward technology is available only for those covered services specified in the negotiated agreement between the health carrier and the health care provider.

(3) An originating site for a telemedicine health care service subject to subsection (1) of this section includes a:

(a) Hospital;

(b) Rural health clinic;

(c) Federally qualified health center;

(d) Physician's or other health care provider's office;

(e) Community mental health center;

(f) Skilled nursing facility;

(g) Home or any location determined by the individual receiving the service; or

(h) Renal dialysis center, except an independent renal dialysis center.

(4) Except for subsection (3)(g) of this section, any originating site under subsection (3) of this section may charge a facility fee for infrastructure and preparation of the patient. Reimbursement for a facility fee must be subject to a negotiated agreement between the originating site and the health carrier. A distant site or any other site not identified in subsection (3) of this section may not charge a facility fee.

(5) A health carrier may not distinguish between originating sites that are rural and urban in providing the coverage required in subsection (1) of this section.

(6) A health carrier may subject coverage of a telemedicine or store and forward technology health service under subsection (1) of this section to all terms and conditions of the plan in which the covered person is enrolled including, but not limited to, utilization review, prior authorization, deductible, copayment, or coinsurance requirements that are applicable to coverage of a comparable health care service provided in person.

(7) This section does not require a health carrier to reimburse:

(a) An originating site for professional fees;

(b) A provider for a health care service that is not a covered benefit under the plan; or

(c) An originating site or health care provider when the site or provider is not a contracted provider under the plan.

(8) For purposes of this section:

(a) "Distant site" means the site at which a physician or other licensed provider, delivering a professional service, is physically located at the time the service is provided through telemedicine;

(b) "Health care service" has the same meaning as in RCW 48.43.005;

(c) "Hospital" means a facility licensed under chapter 70.41, 71.12, or 72.23 RCW;

(d) "Originating site" means the physical location of a patient receiving health care services through telemedicine;

(e) "Provider" has the same meaning as in RCW 48.43.005;

(f) "Store and forward technology" means use of an asynchronous transmission of a covered person's medical information from an originating site to the health care provider at a distant site which results in medical diagnosis and management of the covered person, and does not include the use of audio-only telephone, facsimile, or email; and

(g) "Telemedicine" means the delivery of health care services through the use of interactive audio and video technology, permitting real-time communication between the patient at the originating site and the provider, for the purpose of diagnosis, consultation, or treatment. For purposes of this section only, "telemedicine" does not include the use of audio-only telephone, facsimile, or email.

**Sec.**  RCW 41.05.700 and 2018 c 260 s 30 are each amended to read as follows:

(1)(a) A health plan offered to employees, school employees, and their covered dependents under this chapter issued or renewed on or after January 1, 2017, shall reimburse a provider for a health care service provided to a covered person through telemedicine or store and forward technology if:

((~~(a)~~)) (i) The plan provides coverage of the health care service when provided in person by the provider;

((~~(b)~~)) (ii) The health care service is medically necessary;

((~~(c)~~)) (iii) The health care service is a service recognized as an essential health benefit under section 1302(b) of the federal patient protection and affordable care act in effect on January 1, 2015; and

((~~(d)~~)) (iv) The health care service is determined to be safely and effectively provided through telemedicine or store and forward technology according to generally accepted health care practices and standards, and the technology used to provide the health care service meets the standards required by state and federal laws governing the privacy and security of protected health information.

(b)(i) Except as provided in (b)(ii) of this subsection, a health plan offered to employees, school employees, and their covered dependents under this chapter issued or renewed on or after January 1, 2021, shall reimburse a provider for a health care service provided to a covered person through telemedicine at the same rate as if the health care service was provided in person by the provider.

(ii) Hospitals, hospital systems, telemedicine companies, and provider groups consisting of eleven or more providers may elect to negotiate a reimbursement rate for telemedicine services that differs from the reimbursement rate for in-person services.

(iii) For purposes of this subsection (1)(b), the number of providers in a provider group refers to all providers within the group, regardless of a provider's location.

(2)((~~(a) If the service is provided through store and forward technology there must be an associated office visit between the covered person and the referring health care provider. Nothing in this section prohibits the use of telemedicine for the associated office visit.~~

~~(b)~~)) For purposes of this section, reimbursement of store and forward technology is available only for those covered services specified in the negotiated agreement between the health plan and health care provider.

(3) An originating site for a telemedicine health care service subject to subsection (1) of this section includes a:

(a) Hospital;

(b) Rural health clinic;

(c) Federally qualified health center;

(d) Physician's or other health care provider's office;

(e) Community mental health center;

(f) Skilled nursing facility;

(g) Home or any location determined by the individual receiving the service; or

(h) Renal dialysis center, except an independent renal dialysis center.

(4) Except for subsection (3)(g) of this section, any originating site under subsection (3) of this section may charge a facility fee for infrastructure and preparation of the patient. Reimbursement for a facility fee must be subject to a negotiated agreement between the originating site and the health plan. A distant site or any other site not identified in subsection (3) of this section may not charge a facility fee.

(5) The plan may not distinguish between originating sites that are rural and urban in providing the coverage required in subsection (1) of this section.

(6) The plan may subject coverage of a telemedicine or store and forward technology health service under subsection (1) of this section to all terms and conditions of the plan including, but not limited to, utilization review, prior authorization, deductible, copayment, or coinsurance requirements that are applicable to coverage of a comparable health care service provided in person.

(7) This section does not require the plan to reimburse:

(a) An originating site for professional fees;

(b) A provider for a health care service that is not a covered benefit under the plan; or

(c) An originating site or health care provider when the site or provider is not a contracted provider under the plan.

(8) For purposes of this section:

(a) "Distant site" means the site at which a physician or other licensed provider, delivering a professional service, is physically located at the time the service is provided through telemedicine;

(b) "Health care service" has the same meaning as in RCW 48.43.005;

(c) "Hospital" means a facility licensed under chapter 70.41, 71.12, or 72.23 RCW;

(d) "Originating site" means the physical location of a patient receiving health care services through telemedicine;

(e) "Provider" has the same meaning as in RCW 48.43.005;

(f) "Store and forward technology" means use of an asynchronous transmission of a covered person's medical information from an originating site to the health care provider at a distant site which results in medical diagnosis and management of the covered person, and does not include the use of audio-only telephone, facsimile, or email; and

(g) "Telemedicine" means the delivery of health care services through the use of interactive audio and video technology, permitting real-time communication between the patient at the originating site and the provider, for the purpose of diagnosis, consultation, or treatment. For purposes of this section only, "telemedicine" does not include the use of audio-only telephone, facsimile, or email.

**Sec.**  RCW 74.09.325 and 2017 c 219 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

(1)(a) Upon initiation or renewal of a contract with the Washington state health care authority to administer a medicaid managed care plan, a managed health care system shall reimburse a provider for a health care service provided to a covered person through telemedicine or store and forward technology if:

((~~(a)~~)) (i) The medicaid managed care plan in which the covered person is enrolled provides coverage of the health care service when provided in person by the provider;

((~~(b)~~)) (ii) The health care service is medically necessary;

((~~(c)~~)) (iii) The health care service is a service recognized as an essential health benefit under section 1302(b) of the federal patient protection and affordable care act in effect on January 1, 2015; and

((~~(d)~~)) (iv) The health care service is determined to be safely and effectively provided through telemedicine or store and forward technology according to generally accepted health care practices and standards, and the technology used to provide the health care service meets the standards required by state and federal laws governing the privacy and security of protected health information.

(b)(i) Except as provided in (b)(ii) of this subsection, upon initiation or renewal of a contract with the Washington state health care authority to administer a medicaid managed care plan, a managed health care system shall reimburse a provider for a health care service provided to a covered person through telemedicine at the same rate as if the health care service was provided in person by the provider.

(ii) Hospitals, hospital systems, telemedicine companies, and provider groups consisting of eleven or more providers may elect to negotiate a reimbursement rate for telemedicine services that differs from the reimbursement rate for in-person services.

(iii) For purposes of this subsection (1)(b), the number of providers in a provider group refers to all providers within the group, regardless of a provider's location.

(2)((~~(a) If the service is provided through store and forward technology there must be an associated visit between the covered person and the referring health care provider. Nothing in this section prohibits the use of telemedicine for the associated office visit.~~

~~(b)~~)) For purposes of this section, reimbursement of store and forward technology is available only for those services specified in the negotiated agreement between the managed health care system and health care provider.

(3) An originating site for a telemedicine health care service subject to subsection (1) of this section includes a:

(a) Hospital;

(b) Rural health clinic;

(c) Federally qualified health center;

(d) Physician's or other health care provider's office;

(e) Community mental health center;

(f) Skilled nursing facility;

(g) Home or any location determined by the individual receiving the service; or

(h) Renal dialysis center, except an independent renal dialysis center.

(4) Except for subsection (3)(g) of this section, any originating site under subsection (3) of this section may charge a facility fee for infrastructure and preparation of the patient. Reimbursement for a facility fee must be subject to a negotiated agreement between the originating site and the managed health care system. A distant site or any other site not identified in subsection (3) of this section may not charge a facility fee.

(5) A managed health care system may not distinguish between originating sites that are rural and urban in providing the coverage required in subsection (1) of this section.

(6) A managed health care system may subject coverage of a telemedicine or store and forward technology health service under subsection (1) of this section to all terms and conditions of the plan in which the covered person is enrolled including, but not limited to, utilization review, prior authorization, deductible, copayment, or coinsurance requirements that are applicable to coverage of a comparable health care service provided in person.

(7) This section does not require a managed health care system to reimburse:

(a) An originating site for professional fees;

(b) A provider for a health care service that is not a covered benefit under the plan; or

(c) An originating site or health care provider when the site or provider is not a contracted provider under the plan.

(8) For purposes of this section:

(a) "Distant site" means the site at which a physician or other licensed provider, delivering a professional service, is physically located at the time the service is provided through telemedicine;

(b) "Health care service" has the same meaning as in RCW 48.43.005;

(c) "Hospital" means a facility licensed under chapter 70.41, 71.12, or 72.23 RCW;

(d) "Managed health care system" means any health care organization, including health care providers, insurers, health care service contractors, health maintenance organizations, health insuring organizations, or any combination thereof, that provides directly or by contract health care services covered under this chapter and rendered by licensed providers, on a prepaid capitated basis and that meets the requirements of section 1903(m)(1)(A) of Title XIX of the federal social security act or federal demonstration waivers granted under section 1115(a) of Title XI of the federal social security act;

(e) "Originating site" means the physical location of a patient receiving health care services through telemedicine;

(f) "Provider" has the same meaning as in RCW 48.43.005;

(g) "Store and forward technology" means use of an asynchronous transmission of a covered person's medical information from an originating site to the health care provider at a distant site which results in medical diagnosis and management of the covered person, and does not include the use of audio-only telephone, facsimile, or email; and

(h) "Telemedicine" means the delivery of health care services through the use of interactive audio and video technology, permitting real-time communication between the patient at the originating site and the provider, for the purpose of diagnosis, consultation, or treatment. For purposes of this section only, "telemedicine" does not include the use of audio-only telephone, facsimile, or email.

(9) To measure the impact on access to care for underserved communities and costs to the state and the medicaid managed health care system for reimbursement of telemedicine services, the Washington state health care authority, using existing data and resources, shall provide a report to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the legislature no later than December 31, 2018.

**Sec.**  RCW 28B.20.830 and 2018 c 256 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The collaborative for the advancement of telemedicine is created to enhance the understanding and use of health services provided through telemedicine and other similar models in Washington state. The collaborative shall be hosted by the University of Washington telehealth services and shall be comprised of one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the senate and the house of representatives, and representatives from the academic community, hospitals, clinics, and health care providers in primary care and specialty practices, carriers, and other interested parties.

(2) By July 1, 2016, the collaborative shall be convened. The collaborative shall develop recommendations on improving reimbursement and access to services, including originating site restrictions, provider to provider consultative models, and technologies and models of care not currently reimbursed; identify the existence of telemedicine best practices, guidelines, billing requirements, and fraud prevention developed by recognized medical and telemedicine organizations; and explore other priorities identified by members of the collaborative. After review of existing resources, the collaborative shall explore and make recommendations on whether to create a technical assistance center to support providers in implementing or expanding services delivered through telemedicine technologies.

(3) The collaborative must submit an initial progress report by December 1, 2016, with follow-up policy reports including recommendations by December 1, 2017, December 1, 2018, and December 1, 2021. The reports shall be shared with the relevant professional associations, governing boards or commissions, and the health care committees of the legislature.

(4) The collaborative shall study store and forward technology, with a focus on:

(a) Utilization;

(b) Whether store and forward technology should be paid for at parity with in-person services;

(c) The potential for store and forward technology to improve rural health outcomes in Washington state; and

(d) Ocular services.

(5) The meetings of the board shall be open public meetings, with meeting summaries available on a web page.

((~~(5)~~)) (6) The future of the collaborative shall be reviewed by the legislature with consideration of ongoing technical assistance needs and opportunities. The collaborative terminates December 31, 2021.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  This act takes effect January 1, 2021.

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