March 25, 2020

George Parisotto, Administrative Director
Division of Workers' Compensation
California Department of Industrial Relations
1515 Clay St., 17th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612

RE: COVID-19 & Telehealth Parity in the California Workers' Compensation System

Dear Administrative Director Parisotto:

Our respective organizations are representing physicians and clinics treating injured workers as a part of the California Workers' Compensation system. As the state continues to battle the COVID-19 crisis our physicians and clinics continue to treat injured workers.

We support the efforts of the Governor to emphasize maintaining social distancing. We are also responding to the Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC) Newsline on March 19th encouraging the use of telehealth services for medical treatment when appropriate. Many of our clinics and providers have telehealth capabilities and have been making that option available for injured workers. We fully support having as many injured workers seek treatment via telehealth as appropriate.

The Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC) released an All Plan Letter (APL 20-009) on March 18, 2020 directing health plans to take steps to allow people to obtain health care via telehealth, including telephonic visits, when medically appropriate. The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) released a similar notice to Medi-Cal managed care plans. Those steps include requiring telehealth parity in all aspects of claims and treatment and reimbursing providers at the same rate, whether a service is provided in-person or through
telehealth, including telephone. DMHC's and DHCS' jurisdiction do not include the workers' compensation carriers.

We believe it is critical those same directives be applied to the workers' compensation system to ensure our providers understand they will be reimbursed at the same rate for encouraging injured workers to seek treatment through telehealth. The directive should also clarify that telehealth services be reimbursed at the non-facility rate versus the current facility rate. As such, we request DWC to issue the same directive for workers' compensation.

In addition to the above, we also request DWC to provide guidance regarding necessary documentation, standardized claim reporting, and appropriate billing codes, to ensure consistency across the system.

These directives and guidance will help ensure injured workers continue to receive needed care while maintaining distance to keep both them and healthcare providers from further spreading of the COVID-19.

Respectfully,

California Medical Association

California Occupational Medicine Physicians

Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons of California