



Mercer suggests array of healthcare policy improvements to Congress

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In [written comments](#) submitted to Congress on March 4, Mercer recommends a number of healthcare policy improvements to expand telehealth and virtual care. Mercer also provided [comments](#) in February that suggest ways to control healthcare costs, improve quality, and encourage transparency and innovation. Both sets of comments respond to formal requests for information (RFIs) from the House Republicans' Healthy Future Task Force, created in June to develop the party's healthcare policy agenda. Many of the policy themes addressed in lawmakers' call for comments and Mercer's responses have bipartisan support on Capitol Hill.

Promoting telehealth. Mercer's March 4 comments on the [RFI](#) from the task force's Modernization Subcommittee suggest that Congress build on its prior actions to expand access to and use of telehealth services in several ways, including:

- Reviving and extending telehealth flexibilities created in response to the COVID-19 by enacting [legislation](#) — as done in the just-passed appropriations act ([HR 2471](#)) — to extend first-dollar coverage of telehealth under high-deductible health plans paired with health savings accounts
- Removing state barriers to telehealth
- Expanding telehealth access for underserved populations
- Rejecting mandates that require payment parity for telehealth and in-person services
- Encouraging the use of virtual healthcare and new artificial intelligence capabilities in practical ways that ensure patient privacy, safety and culturally appropriate care

Increasing affordability. The Feb. 4 response to the [RFI](#) from the task force's Affordability Subcommittee shares key insights from Mercer's 2021 [National Survey of Employer-Sponsored Health Plans](#) on how employers are coping with a spike in costs and working to mitigate the impact on employees. The letter also addresses a broad range of issues identified by lawmakers as they consider "legislation that would increase price transparency, lower barriers to competition, and empower

consumers to have more choice in their healthcare providers.” Specific issues addressed in Mercer’s comments include:

- How employers are innovating to lower costs and improve care through initiatives that manage high-cost claimants and specialty drugs, while balancing cost and quality to achieve value
- How more transparency and quality information can help address affordability, including numerous suggestions to build on and improve the 2020 [transparency-in-coverage regulations](#)
- How compliance challenges limit individual-coverage health reimbursement arrangements
- How to improve the government’s [340B Drug Pricing Program](#) to bring healthcare services and medicines to uninsured and low-income patients using discounts from drug manufacturers

Related resources

Non-Mercer resources

- [RFI on design considerations for legislation to make healthcare more affordable](#) (Healthy Future Task Force Affordability Subcommittee, Jan. 10, 2022)
- [RFI on the use of wearable technologies, expansion of telemedicine and digital modernization efforts in US healthcare system](#) (Healthy Future Task Force Modernization Subcommittee, Jan. 5, 2022)

Mercer resources

- [Congress set to pass short-term renewal of predeductible telehealth coverage](#) (March 10, 2022)
- [Comments on Healthy Future Task Force Modernization Subcommittee’s RFI](#) (Mercer, March 4, 2022)
- [Comments on Healthy Future Task Force Affordability Subcommittee’s RFI](#) (Mercer, Feb. 4, 2022)

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