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**Health Insurers Urge CBO to consider non-Medicare Sources of Data in Scoring
Congressional Telemedicine Proposals**

October 18, 2016 – Today, health insurers covering millions of Americans urged officials at the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to look at the experience of commercial insurers when considering the impact of telemedicine coverage in Medicare.

“We view telemedicine as an important tool in increasing consumer access to high quality, affordable health care, improving patient satisfaction and reducing costs” wrote the insurers. “We believe our experience in the commercial market can inform estimates of the impact of policy changes in Medicare.”

Millions of Americans are receiving coverage of telemedicine services through their employer or health insurer. Evidence suggests that these services are replacing more expensive care while providing a convenient option to see a doctor. However, seniors are left out.

Telemedicine is only permitted in Medicare under a very narrow set of circumstances, but there is a major bi-partisan effort to change the law and expand access. Legislation in Congress must be evaluated by the CBO, but because of the restrictions on telemedicine usage in Medicare, there is limited Medicare data. In light of this lack of data, the CBO should consider the effects that telemedicine’s expansion in the commercial market has had on access, health outcomes, and costs when estimating the budgetary effects of making telemedicine benefits in Medicare commensurate with the rest of the American healthcare system.

“As the letter states, we carefully examine how new benefits will improve the experience and care of our customers while also keeping premiums affordable. Health insurers across the country have determined that telemedicine can improve access to quality care and lower costs. Our experience shows that Medicare beneficiaries and taxpayers will benefit by adding telemedicine to Medicare.” said John Jessor, Vice President at Anthem and President of LiveHealth Online, the company’s telemedicine initiative.