



TESTIMONY

Delivered by Deborah R. Hoyt, President and CEO
The Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home

Before the Connecticut General Assembly Insurance and Real Estate Committee

February 19, 2013

Raised Bill No. **858**

An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage for Telemedicine Services

Good morning Senator Crisco, Representative Megna and members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee. My name is Deborah Hoyt, President and CEO of the Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home.

The Association represents 60 licensed and certified home health and hospice agencies that perform 5-million home health and community-based visits in our inner cities and rural Connecticut towns each year.

With a growing Connecticut workforce of 11,000 employees and skilled nurses, *we* are the *only* health providers that walk through the front doors of 14,000 state residents each day and understand the value that technology and interactive data communication brings to person-centered care.

We SUPPORT the expansion of the use of telemedicine and the need for health insurance coverage for such services.

In 2003, Hartford-based VNA Healthcare, the largest home health agency in Connecticut, pioneered the use of telemonitors with 30 cardiac patients. Today, more than half of our home health agencies utilize telemonitors in their clients' homes, and have for years, without any reimbursement from insurance companies, Medicare or Medicaid.

Home health providers have embraced the use of this technology, despite the out-of-pocket cost to the agency, simply because it works - and it's the right thing to do for the individual.

Local and national studies have found that telemedicine:

- Reduces costly hospitalizations
- Improves the quality of life for individuals receiving care at home
- Enables self-care education and intervention
- Improves depression symptoms
- Is cost-effective and saves millions of dollars across the health continuum
- Produces positive outcomes for patients



VNA Healthcare surveyed home health clients with telemonitors installed in their homes. Results indicated 92% of patients viewed the use of technology favorably and said it provided a sense of security and peace of mind. The security was the result of knowing that they are clinically connected, which led to reduced stress and ultimately better overall health.

Partners HealthCare in Boston, MA – recently reported on its use of telehealth to aid cardiac patients. Partners stated there has been a 51% reduction in heart failure hospital readmissions, an improved patient understanding of their condition, and more than \$8,000 in savings for participating patients. The total savings from 1,265 patients enrolled in the program totaled more than \$10.3 million.

Expanding the use of technology in Connecticut and the benefit of overall healthcare savings can only come about if the providers who install, monitor, and train the patient to use the equipment is reimbursed.

Hartford-based VNA Healthcare reports that one telemonitor costs approximately \$8 to \$10 per day per client, and the average length of stay/use is 90 days per unit.

Currently, the only insurance company I am aware of that reimburses Connecticut home health agencies is ConnectiCare. VNA Healthcare reports that ConnectiCare covers telemonitoring, but only for its cardiac disease management health plan members.

As the state of Connecticut increases the number of residents receiving health care at home and aging in place, the cost-benefit of this shift will only be achieved through the increased use of telemedicine.

Providers need the incentive of being reimbursed for acquiring, installing and training on the use of this equipment immediately.

Home health care and telemedicine are proven to be the cost effective solution to the state's healthcare and fiscal crises.

Please reach out to us as a resource for additional information at any time.

Thank you.