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Comments: Please find below a letter I recently sent to Rep Sirivasan, which relates to Friday's hearing.

Dear Representative Srinivasan:

I am a psychologist practicing in the state of Connecticut and the president of the Connecticut Psychological Association's Forensic Division. Though I was not present on Friday, as I was out of town, I submitted written testimony on HB6267. I watched the testimony this morning, and wished to take a few moments of time to clarify some points for you. You asked some excellent questions, which were not answered clearly.

1. Court ordered evaluations are not covered under health insurance because they fill a legal purpose. Every health insurance policy has a clause explaining that they only covered health related claims. Thus,

if someone has their neck examined in order to get money from a car accident, that is not covered either.

2. Psychologists fill many roles for the court in addition to evaluator, such as mediator or co-parent coach. We often say that we are not there as therapists, but in another role. This can be confusing to litigants, but we want to be up front and honest as there is a difference.

3. One of the main differences is that therapists are often allied with their clients. This is acceptable for a therapist but not for a court appointed neutral. That is why a report by a therapist is not the same thing as a neutral custody evaluation. Additionally, the evaluator has access to a wider scope of information than does an individual therapist. This is also confusing to some parents, because litigants may initially understand why their therapist, who will provide a letter to the court, is not as valued by the court as a longer, more in-depth evaluations focused on the needs of the child. As a physicians, you understand that, legally speaking, a therapist can serve as a fact witness, but not the court's expert.

If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your time.

Stephanie Stein Leite, Psy.D.