

# Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-302

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING TELEHEALTH SERVICES.

**Vote Date:** 3/23/2018

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/16/2018

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Public Health Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill allows a telehealth provider with the appropriate authority to prescribe a schedule I, II or III controlled substance using telehealth for the treatment of a psychiatric disorder. The telehealth provider must inform the patient about the availability of telehealth services and obtain the patient's consent to provide such services and document this in the patient record. If the patient later revokes their consent, it must be documented in the patient record.

At the initial telehealth interaction, a provider must ask the patient for consent to disclose telehealth records to his or her primary care provider. If the patient consents, the bill requires the telehealth provider to give the primary care provider records of all telehealth interactions. Under the bill, consent for disclosure of records may be obtained from the patient, or the patient's legal guardian, conservator or other authorized representative.

The bill adds registered nurses and pharmacists to the list of professionals who may provide telehealth services.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

None submitted.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS):** Over the years, CSMS has supported legislation that would expand resources in the delivery and treatment of addiction. CSMS

recommends that stakeholders have conversations similar to those regarding the Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) program prior to expanding the provider groups who may participate in providing telehealth services. This would help to ensure that they are practicing within the scope of their professions, as well as those established for the provision of telehealth services. CSMS participated in a number of efforts to pass legislation to establish parameters for the reasonable and safe use of telehealth services. Our focus has been to ensure that there is an appropriate physician/patient relationship and that there are safeguards in place to control and limit remote prescribing. With this in place, CSMS supports the legislation to increase access to MAT through the use of telehealth and offers its resources and input as the legislation moves forward.

**Connecticut Association of Health Plans:**

We respectfully request that the Public Health Committee set-aside time to meet with our representatives to discuss the intended and unintended consequences that SB 302 may cause if enacted into law.

**Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA):**

Although the practice of telehealth is still fairly new within the development of patient care delivery methods, Connecticut, along with many other states is expanding their use of this technology. In its initial stage, telehealth was largely used for the delivery of primary care but, in recent years, has been expanded to include a wider spectrum of health care services. CHA is in full support of this legislation as the intent of these measures will increase access to care and provides clarifications to existing telehealth laws.

**Suzi Craig, Senior Director of Policy, Mental Health Connecticut (MHC):**

Ms. Craig cited a recent report from HIS Technology report which predicted that by the year 2018, the field of telemedicine services would explode to include an anticipated 7 million patient users up from 350,000 in 2013. With that prediction, telehealth will play an important role in the delivery of health care. Access to care is critical in addressing the health care needs of a diverse consumer population.

Although MHC supports the intent of the legislation, it needs to be noted that many individuals with chronic pain are more likely to be unable to leave their homes to seek the care they need. Therefore, we would recommend that the Public Health Committee explore methods to help these consumers.

Lastly, as you explore ways to increase the provision of health care services via the internet, it is very important that consideration be given to provide support for broadband initiatives. Expanding telehealth services without reliable online access will fail. We recommend that the committee explore an FCC initiative called "Connct2Health".

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None submitted.

**Reported by: Kathleen Panazza**

**Date: 3/29/2018**