



# Community Health Center Association of Connecticut

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Testimony of

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Supporting

*SB 1052: An Act Expanding Medicaid Coverage of Telehealth Services*

Human Services Committee

March 19, 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to provide support for Senate Bill 1052, An Act Expanding Medicaid Coverage of Telehealth Services.

On behalf of the Community Health Center Association of Connecticut (CHCACT), and its sixteen member federally-qualified health centers, I want to thank the Committee for raising this bill.

**CHCACT supports this bill**, which would enhance access to health care services for Medicaid enrollees.

“Telehealth” is a broad term for a variety of innovative techniques in health care, including:

- remote patient monitoring, in which patients are able to use a mobile medical device (usually in their own homes) to perform routine tests and send data to their providers. This allows providers to monitor certain patients’ regular blood pressure or glucose readings, without requiring those patients to travel to the office.
- eConsults, in which primary care providers send patient information to specialists, who then respond within a few hours with recommendations. The primary care provider then contacts the patient with those recommendations (which may include a recommendation to see a specialist in person).
- online communication between patients and providers, in which patients, in real time, have conversations (e.g., through Skype) with providers. This can include behavioral health providers.

Telehealth is valuable because:

- It enhances access to primary care and specialty services;
- It helps patients receive health care services without having to take a day off from work/childcare and get transportation to another medical appointment (also important for patients who face barriers to leaving their homes);
- It promotes patient engagement with their own health care.
- It can enhance communication between specialists and primary care providers; and,
- It saves money in the system by reducing office visits;

For these reasons, CHCACT supports the provision of telehealth services in the Medicaid program.

Importantly, CHCACT requests that the legislature ensures that federally-qualified health centers are allowed to be paid for the provision of telehealth services. Currently, the state pays for eConsults through HUSKY, but **federally-qualified health centers are specifically precluded from receiving payment**. The [latest Policy Bulletin](#) issued by the state confirms this case.

CHCACT is concerned that, even if DSS implements telehealth for HUSKY, health centers may still be excluded from payments. Connecticut's health centers serve about 400,000 people each year from across the state, including over 240,000 HUSKY enrollees. It simply doesn't make sense to put these 240,000 patients at a disadvantage to accessing care.

Thank you for your consideration and your hard work on behalf of Connecticut residents. Please feel free to reach out with any questions: [dpolun@chcact.org](mailto:dpolun@chcact.org) or 860.667.7820.