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Dear Senator Abrams and Representative Steinberg, and Members of the Public Health Committee:

I am a licensed Psychologist in the State of Connecticut and a Board member of the Connecticut Psychological Association writing in support of **HB 5596** and **SB 1022** (An Act Concerning Telehealth), which are now before the Public Health Committee for public testimony. While an adjunct tool and not a substitute for in-person sessions when these are available and accessible for clients and can be safely conducted, there is mounting evidence demonstrating the efficacy of telehealth services and for how the availability of telehealth sessions increase access to care and provide for greater continuity of care as well as for how telehealth services contain costs for healthcare systems.

The effectiveness of telehealth has now been demonstrated via numerous observational studies, growing evidence from the field, and retrospective cohort studies, particularly with regard to the great necessity for the expanded use of telehealth services that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. If passed, this law would permanently provide critical coverage for telehealth to the same extent as in-person services and should also include audio-only telehealth.

This law will facilitate that telehealth services are provided in a clinically appropriate manner whether via video or telephone and as importantly and necessary, that telehealth services are covered in the same manner as any client/insured's benefits coverage for in-person sessions. Thus, if a client/insured can be seen in-person for a \$30 copay requirement, this same \$30 copay should apply if a need arises for a session to be conducted via telehealth. In the past, while implying "parity" for telehealth services, insurers have in fact established quite different coverage for telehealth services such as to require a client/insured meets a deductible before covering telehealth services at a copay for plans where the same in-person session would be covered at only a copay and not subject to any deductible. Thank you for your consideration toward passing this telehealth bill into permanent law and for ensuring in-person and telehealth sessions are covered exactly the same by insurers.

Sincerely,

Ralph P. Balducci, PhD
Psychologist

March 15, 2021

