

March 15, 2021

To the CT Public Health Committee:

I am in strongly support of HB 5596 and SB 1022 as I have relied on telehealth to provide psychotherapy to all of my patients during the pandemic. Telehealth allows critical access to my patients who suffer from mental illness, particularly patients who have limited means to transportation and/or have work schedules that don't allow them to take off hours of time for a weekly or biweekly appointment. For the most vulnerable people, telehealth may continue to be the only means by which mental health services can be utilized.

Nearly all psychologists, social workers and psychotherapists moved to online platforms in 2020 to continue to treat patients during the Covid-19 crisis. While we each learned the technology required and invested in hardware and software to facilitate this change, we've seen our reimbursement rates cut because we can't see patients in person. The costs are a burden to our practices and, for some practitioners, the loss of income limits their ability to sustain their practice. The result is a further lack of services to a very important and deserving population.

I hope you will support a fair reimbursement rate for mental health services delivered over telehealth platforms and make insurances pay an amount equivalent to in-person services.

Sincerely,

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