

## **Rebecca G. Calabrese LCSW, LLC**

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TO: MEMBERS OF THE INSURANCE AND REAL ESTATE AND PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEES

FROM: REBECCA G. CALABRESE

DATE: MARCH 15, 2021

RE: SUPPORT OF HB5596 and SB1022 AN ACT CONCERNING TELEHEALTH

I am writing today in strong support of the two bills being heard today regarding telehealth. I have been a practicing therapist in Waterbury, Connecticut for more than 35 years. I have significant background in clinical practice, as well as in practice management. I want to thank you very much for holding this hearing and for recognizing the value of continuing telehealth options. During these past 12 months of significantly limited access to most medical services for all but the most urgent of care, we were forced to find alternative ways to provide care for our patients. Both public and private insurers have on an emergency basis allowed telemedicine as an alternative method of providing care.

My office was able to provide care for approximately 98% of our patient's visits without exposing them or our other patients and staff members to the risk of close personal contact. Many of my patients adapted to the new technology and most of them had little problem with smart phone or desktop apps to allow them to both see and hear our therapy sessions. In general, certain conditions and patients do need in person sessions, however a portion of issues can be evaluated and treated via telehealth options. Especially during times of turmoil and uncertainty, readily available mental health options are an absolute necessity, and can be a matter of life and death.

Telehealth technology is important tool however to keep in the toolbox going forward.

Think about a patient who is too ill to come to the office, or who may be a member of a vulnerable group who shouldn't come to the office, or who may be working and can't take the time needed to come to the office. In all of these cases, a virtual office visit will provide an efficient and smart way to provide care for those patients.

I fully support not only the extension of current telehealth provisions in Connecticut, but to keep it viable until longer term. Thank you for focusing on this very important issue and I urge passage of this legislation keeping the telehealth option open and available need it.

Respectfully submitted:



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Rebecca G. Calabrese, LCSW