

Roni Cohen–Sandler, Ph.D.

Licensed Psychologist

7 White Oak Lane
Weston, CT 06883
(203) 222–8050
roni@ronicohensandler.com

March 16, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: H.B. No. 5596 and S.B. No. 1022

As a clinical psychologist licensed in Connecticut, I am writing to express my strong support of these two telehealth bills.

Since 1986, I have been in private practice, where I conduct psychoeducational and neuropsychological evaluations of children, adolescents, and young adults. During the pandemic, as soon as medical offices reopened in Spring, 2020, I resumed seeing patients in person while following CDC and state COVID-19 guidelines. I quickly discovered, however, that masks were a grave impediment to my work. Not only is it imperative to read facial expressions, but also it is crucial for clients and I to be able to hear each other clearly, which masks often made impossible.

As a result, I spent the better part of two months getting training in methods of conducting testing remotely. Having done this for eight months now, I have been rather surprised at the unexpected benefits of doing so. Telehealth methods have allowed me to assess young people whose emotional wellbeing is at greatest risk. I have been able to work with students with severe anxiety, especially social anxiety, that has until now deterred them from seeking help in a professional office. In addition, I have conducted numerous evaluations of college students who are studying in various states around the country, whose psychiatrists, suspecting serious, sometimes deteriorating, mental illness, needed more information urgently. These emerging adults were unable to travel—because of ill health, college demands, financial considerations, and COVID-19.

In sum, the opportunity to use telehealth practices has opened my eyes to the vastly greater impact psychologists can have on populations who need us most. Never in my 35+ years in this profession have I witnessed a more valuable innovation, which is why I am advocating for telehealth to be made permanent.

Sincerely,

Roni Cohen-Sandler, Ph.D.