

**TESTIMONY OF
REBECCA COLASANTO, LCSW
SYSTEM DIRECTOR OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
BRISTOL HEALTH
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH, AND
INSURANCE AND REAL ESTATE COMMITTEES
Monday, March 15, 2021**

**HB 5596 An Act Concerning Telehealth and
SB1022 An Act Concerning Telehealth**

My name is Rebecca Colasanto and I am a licensed clinical social worker and have been employed by Bristol Health in several capacities for more than 16 years.

In all of this time I have worked with patients providing behavioral health care services to improve their health, well-being, and quality of life. In these years I have watched patients/clients succumb to poor outcomes secondary to access to care issues such as transportation, physical or psychiatric difficulties interfering with their ability to leave the home, among other scenarios.

Telehealth has been available in other states for some time. If you have the insurance that covers it and live in the state that allows it, it has been a choice people can make to access care. Telehealth should not be a spa service only accessed by the wealthy. Increasing access to telehealth beyond the pandemic is critical in promoting holistic wellness to our communities, reducing stigma, and reaching populations that would otherwise be underserved and marginalized.

Having experienced pivoting almost all in person behavioral health services to telehealth last year further depicted what we already know in healthcare. Telehealth needs to be and remain an option in care delivery. More specifically, let's do more to reach people who are at risk for suicide and those at risk for opioid overdose. Let's do more to reach children who don't have a ride to treatment. Let's do more to reach

homebound individuals. Let's do more so that when anyone in our family needs treatment and wishes to use a telehealth option to access care they can.

Please support HB 5596 and SB1022.

Thank you for accepting my testimony