

To the CT Public Health Committee,

I am writing this letter in support of H.B. 5596 and S.B. 1022. As a psychotherapist/Licensed counselor, I strongly support and advocate for making permanent the acceptance of telehealth (including audio only) as a delivery method for psychological services. I firmly believe that reimbursement for these services should permanently be at an equivalent reimbursement rate as for in-person services.

Throughout this pandemic, we have learned how valuable telehealth, as a delivery service for psychological services, has been. This service has not only allowed me to continue to provide services in a pandemic, but has also allowed me to expand my services throughout use of this platform. Even now, the demand for these services far exceeds the availability of them.

One of the benefits of telehealth has been that I have been able to provide ongoing psychotherapy for individuals who are immunocompromised. Clients with health conditions can continue to access services, if telehealth were continued and made permanent. While I have many clients who are eager to return to my office, I do have many who find therapy from the comfort of their home to be beneficial. These cases include new mothers, adults who have an aging or ill parent/family member living with them, people who are recovering from injuries or with health issues, or those with crippling anxiety who feel unable to leave home to travel to a public office space.

I encourage you to pass these bills. Equivalent reimbursement rates for telehealth is crucial. Providing therapy via telehealth does not cost providers of these services less; we still have billing staff to pay and office space to rent. Our expenses remain the same, regardless of how the service is provided. Passage of these bills provides essential services to the residents of CT, at a time when mental health needs are surging throughout this country.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Cunningham, MS, LPC