

Ilene Grueneberg, Ph.D.  
200 Oak Street  
Glastonbury, CT 06033  
p 860 -657-8868 f 860.657.8802

March 14, 2021

Dear Members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Dr. Ilene Grueneberg and I am a licensed clinical psychologist and I live and work in Glastonbury. I also serve as the Convention chair for the Connecticut Psychological Association. I am writing in support of SB 1022/ HB 5596 An Act Concerning Telehealth.

During the COVID19 health emergency, telehealth became crucial for psychologists to deliver mental and behavioral health services. Telehealth allowed patients to safely continue their therapy despite quarantine restrictions. Additionally, telehealth, including audio phone-only service delivery, increased accessibility to services. As a full time practitioner, and the co-owner of a group practice, I and my colleagues were able to expand our availability to clients due to the flexibility of telehealth. Clients too, had greater flexibility without having to leave their house or manage work hours and child care restrictions...increasing their ability to access services.

Parity of payment for telehealth is a particularly critical component of this bill. Not only is parity the right thing to do, parity will allow providers to sustainably provide this service delivery option. Without payment parity, access to mental and behavioral health services will decrease. Without payment parity, we would not be able to offer telehealth services regularly without undue financial burdens.

The limited access to appropriate care is acutely relevant to practice. Many of us work with populations of very young children, school-age children, and adolescents; and adults as old as 90. Several in our practice are HUSKY and Medicare providers and treat individuals from a spectrum of socio-economic levels and sociological circumstances.. Providing ongoing telehealth services in addition to traditional face-to-face services is essential to increasing access to services. Audio-only telehealth services is another critical component of this bill and directly connects with access to our most vulnerable patients. Audio-only has been essential for clients without access to consistent and private internet services, financial hardship, complex social and environmental factors; as well as, during unexpected disruptions to visual and audio connections.

Research and training for telehealth service delivery has demonstrated it is safe and effective. Psychologists have been delivering therapeutic services via telehealth within the Department of Defense, as well as in most states, for at least 10 years. The COVID19 pandemic simply expanded the use of telehealth abruptly for all psychologists across the country, simultaneously. As a member of Connecticut Psychological Association, I was able to receive immediate training on providing telehealth psychological services, both with expert telehealth psychologists and with ethics and risk specialists through my professional insurance carrier.

I urge your support of SB 1022/ HB 5596 An Act Concerning Telehealth.

Respectfully,  
Ilene Grueneberg, Ph.D.  
Psychologist  
Ilene4kids@aol.com

