

March 14, 2021

Dear Members of the Public Health Committee,

I am writing in support of SB 1022/ HB 5596 An Act Concerning Telehealth.

I am a licensed clinical psychologist living and working in New Haven. During the 15 years I have been psychologist and the several years of doctoral training preceding that, I have devoted my career to serving individuals with serious mental illness. This is a population of individuals who frequently have difficulty accessing in-person care. The myriad reasons include difficulty with transportation, childcare, mobility, among other factors.

During the COVID19 health emergency, telehealth became crucial for psychologists to deliver mental and behavioral health services. Telehealth allowed patients to access care remotely during a time of extreme stress and for those who already had care connections, to continue their therapy despite quarantine restrictions. Additionally, telehealth, include phone-only service delivery, increased accessibility to services. Audio-only access has been crucial for individuals without access to consistent and private internet services.

It is important to note that without payment parity, many providers will not be able to offer telehealth services due to financial limitations. Parity of payment for telehealth is a particularly critical component of this bill allowing providers to sustainably provide this service delivery option. Without payment parity, access to mental and behavioral health services will decrease at a time when mental health need is expected to skyrocket.

Research and training for telehealth service delivery has demonstrated it is safe and effective and the COVID19 pandemic simply expanded the use of telehealth abruptly for all psychologists across the country. As a member of Connecticut Psychological Association, I was pleased they offered 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,

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