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Dear Members of the Public Health Committee:

Thank you, in advance, for taking the time to consider how this past year of mental health delivery might serve as the foundation for changing the landscape of future delivery of therapeutic services. I am a strong supporter of SB 1022/HB 5596 and urge your support, as well.

I have been licensed as a clinical psychologist in Connecticut since 2000 and am a member of the Connecticut Psychological Association. Professionally, I work in private practice in Newtown and for Nuvance Health's Outpatient Psychiatry Department in Danbury. Throughout the pandemic, telehealth has allowed for a seamless delivery of care to my patients. Access to care finally is more universal. Schedule conflicts no longer prevent individuals from seeking mental health care. Patients no longer need to build in travel time for appointments. Treatment compliance is high.

Across the board, telehealth has been a tremendous success and it has improved the process for all of my patients. They receive the same level of care, the same type of care that they received during in person visits. Only now, barriers to care have been eliminated. More individuals than ever before are seeking services now that they can receive mental health care from the privacy of their own homes.

As a provider, my work has not changed. I still provide the same services in the same block of allotted time. As a result, parity of payment is a critical component of this bill. As psychologists, our codes for reimbursement are based on time spent with the patient. As the time blocks remain the same, so should our rate of reimbursement. It really is that simple. From a purely financial perspective, it would be unsustainable for me to continue to provide telehealth therapy to my patients if rates of reimbursement were to differ. This would directly impact my patients, as it is because of the ease of access to care that many of them have sought mental health for the very first time.

I urge you to support SB 1022/HB 5596. Telehealth breaks down barriers and allows individuals across the state to seek the very best care available.

Thank you for your consideration.

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