



INÉS M. SCHROEDER, PSY.D.

Date: 3-14-2021

Re: Support of SB 1022/ HB 5596 An Act Concerning Telehealth

Dear Members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Dr. Ines Schroeder and I am a licensed clinical psychologist and a constituent of District 28. I live and work in Wethersfield, CT. 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 clients to seamlessly continue their therapy despite quarantine restrictions. Additionally, telehealth, include phone-only service delivery, increased accessibility to services. The needs of the community were great over the past year and the ability to increase available client hours and the flexibility of telehealth were significantly essential. Clients too, had greater flexibility without having to leave their house or manage work hours and child-care restrictions.

Parity of payment for telehealth is a particularly critical component of this bill. Not only is parity the right thing to do, parity of payment 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, this service would not be available for those clients most in need.

The limited access to appropriate care is acutely relevant. Work with clients with financial constraints, transportation issues, and limited childcare options requires that practitioners have the ability to provide services in a flexible and timely manner to meet their needs. Many clients are from a lower socio-economic level and having this flexibility permits them access to services that would otherwise be out of their capacity to maintain. 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 clients. 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 ethic and risk specialists through my professional insurance carrier.

Telehealth service delivery is one additional part to the complex healthcare puzzle, will provide some relief for the access problem, and will help more people.

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

Respectfully,

Inés Schroeder, Psy. D. Licensed Psychologist #002236