



March 15, 2021

Re: *H.B. No.5596 AN ACT CONCERNING TELEHEALTH
*S.B. No.1022 AN ACT CONCERNING TELEHEALTH

To the Members of the Public Health Committee and the Real Estate and Insurance Committee of the Connecticut State Legislature:

I am a licensed psychologist in Connecticut, and I am writing to urge you to vote in favor of **HB No. 5596** and **SB No. 1022, An Act Concerning Telehealth**. Nearly one year ago, I transitioned my psychotherapy practice from in-person to online via HIPAA-compliant telehealth due to the coronavirus pandemic. For me, the transition to video-therapy was easy, and my existing patients were grateful to be able to continue their treatment despite not being able to meet in person. I was also able to start treating patients in other parts of Connecticut, who otherwise would not have been able to work with me. I have been told by some of these patients that they have felt more comfortable disclosing personal information and being vulnerable in our telehealth sessions than they would have in person.

Telehealth increases access to many people who don't have enough mental health providers near them, where local providers are full or too expensive, or don't offer a needed specialized treatment. It also affords mental health providers the ability to be more flexible in scheduling, as well as continuity of care during weather unsafe for driving or when someone needs to stay home with a sick family member.

Telehealth was *and continues to be* life-saving for my patients, in providing safe treatment for them, and for me and my family, in allowing me to continue my livelihood without putting my health and life at risk. ***I urge you to vote 'Yes' on these bills*** and make Connecticut a leader in ensuring the permanent acceptance of telehealth as a delivery method of psychological services, not dependent upon the variable policies of insurance companies, and at equivalent reimbursement rates as for in-person services. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Allison Sidel, Ph.D.
CT License #3106
Owner, Hawthorn Therapy and Consulting, LLC
Brookfield, CT