

Stuart J. Sokol, Ph.D.
82 Beckett Avenue
Branford, CT 06405
203 605-6534
stujay@gmail.com

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Dear Public Health Committee Members,

My name is Stuart Sokol, and I am a licensed clinical psychologist who has practiced in CT for 30 years. I am also a member of the Connecticut Psychological Association and have served on its Board for many years. I recently retired but feel very strongly about HB no. 5596 and SB no. 1022 (An Act Concerning Telehealth) which you will be considering this upcoming week, and I therefore wanted to reach out to you to share some thoughts.

I don't need to tell you how the past year has impacted people in ways not seen before. More citizens of CT than ever before have found themselves needing mental health services to try to cope with the devastation of the pandemic. Telehealth was often the only way that psychological services could be delivered to those in need. There have been services provided with video capability and audio-only, and this was often determined by peoples' access/ownership of certain resources. The past year has shown that these services proved invaluable for consumers. Studies have been conducted nationally and data is readily available that show that people often prefer this modality of treatment and would like telehealth to remain a treatment option in the future, after the threat of covid has diminished. I take the position that telehealth should be made available on a permanent basis, and I urge you to support this as well.

Additionally, the data show that mental health services provided via telehealth are equally as valuable to the consumer as services that are provided in-person. For this reason, I urge you to support making reimbursement for services equivalent, whether provided in-person at an office or clinic or via telehealth (video and/or audio-only).

My professional colleagues have done a truly amazing job helping those in need of services over the past year. I am quite proud of them and have great admiration for them as they have risen to the challenge presented to them.

Please help psychologists continue to provide the needed treatment to the community members seeking mental health services in the telehealth format. Please support "An Act Concerning Telehealth"/ H.B. #5596 and S.B. #1022. Thank you for your time and your hard work as members of the committee.

Sincerely,

Stuart J. Sokol, Ph.D.