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Dear Members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Dr. Meghan Butler and I am a licensed clinical psychologist and a constituent of District 2, as I live in Old Saybrook and work in Glastonbury. I also serve on the executive committee of the Connecticut Psychological Association. 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 patients to seamlessly continue their therapy despite quarantine restrictions. Additionally, telehealth, include phone-only service delivery, increased accessibility to mental health services. As a sole practitioner, I was able to increase my available patient hours due to the flexibility offered by telehealth. Patients too, had greater ability to access appointments with flexibility of location, work hours, and without 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, I would not be able to offer telehealth services regularly in my practice due to financial limitations.

The limited access to appropriate care is acutely relevant to my practice. I work with a specialized population of very young children, school-age children, and adolescents; am training to provide trauma-informed care; and am a HUSKY provider and treat individuals from a spectrum of socio-economic levels. 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 patients. Audio-only has been essential for patients 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 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,

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