

July 21, 2020

Insurance and Real Estate Committee
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: Proposed Draft Telehealth Bill

Dear Senators and Representatives,

On behalf of the CT Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I am writing in support of the telehealth bill being proposed, in which telehealth services would be extended through June of 2021. Throughout this global pandemic, speech-language pathologists and audiologists have been able to provide vital services through the use of telemedicine, when it otherwise would not be safe for them to come into the clinic.

In the pediatric population, telehealth services have provided a way into the family's home. Our children have not been in school and have been receiving a very wide range of services, from almost nothing to school-based tele-therapy. By offering a consistent outpatient model of speech-language pathology, our children have not only continued making progress, but our clinicians have been able to gain new perspective on the lives of our patients. There has been an increase in parent accountability and new goals have been established that make more sense for communication in home environment. The therapists have been able to make a difference as if they were providing home based services, while keeping our families safe.

We recognize that this model does not work for all families and all situations. It has been imperative to have the flexibility in the scheduling. As clinics have started to slowly re-open to seeing in-person speech therapy visits, we have found that the number of patient cancellations and no-shows have dropped from about 28% down to 15%. We have been able to turn what would have been cancellations for in-person visits into tele-health visits, still providing the care that is needed.

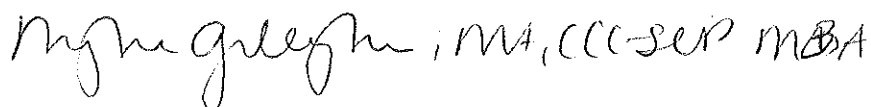
For our adult population, intense speech-language therapy is necessary following acute injuries such as traumatic brain injuries or strokes. Patients with these injuries are often discharged from the hospital and rehab facilities before they reach their full potential with speech and language or cognitive therapy. If they are unable to be seen in person, due to not having a ride or being at too high of a risk for potential exposure, they would be unable to receive the vital services they need to recover from their own injuries. The tele-health over the last few months has allowed the speech-language pathologists to continue to provide the kind of care our patients need to recover in the safest manner possible.

We at the CT Speech-Language-Hearing Association urge you to support this bill for the good of our patients, who continue to need this care. While it is wonderful that it is being considered through the

end of June 2021, we believe that this pandemic has proven that there are so many additional benefits to tele-health for our profession that it should continue to be an option even beyond next June. Telehealth is not replacing the value of the in-person visit, however it is providing a valuable alternative to the classic therapy model and enhancing overall outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on this bill. Should you have any questions or need further information, please contact Meghan Gallagher, M.A., CCC-SLP, VP of Legislative Affairs for the Connecticut Speech Language and Hearing Association at meghangallagher11@gmail.com or 860-357-1047

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Meghan Gallagher, M.A., CCC-SLP, MBA".

Meghan Gallagher, M.A. CCC-SLP, MBA
Speech-Language Pathologist
VP Legislative affairs, CT Speech Language Hearing Association
Haddam, CT