

Testimony of

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*In Support of
House Bill 5198: An Act Concerning Telehealth*

Public Health Committee
February 26, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments supporting this important bill.

On behalf of the Community Health Center Association of Connecticut (CHC/ACT), and its sixteen member community health centers, I want to thank the Committee for its dedication to listening to Connecticut's residents about these important issues. Connecticut's community health centers serve more than 420,000 people each year, providing medical, behavioral health, and dental care in hundreds of locations across the state. In 2022, Connecticut health centers provided over 653,000 telehealth visits.

CHC/ACT supports this bill, which would allow for a continuation of telehealth services for the next three years. In fact, we recommend making this provision permanent.

Telehealth services help address geographic, economic, transportation, and linguistic barriers to healthcare access, while boosting staff retention and decreasing no-shows and missed appointments. These services have been available for several years and became increasingly important during the pandemic. Importantly, telehealth helps reduce inequity and improve health outcomes.

Telehealth is valuable because:

- It enhances access to both primary care and specialty services;
- It helps patients receive health care services without having to take a day off from work/school and get transportation to another medical appointment (also important for patients who face barriers to leaving their homes);
- It promotes patient engagement with their own health care;
- It can enhance communication between specialists and primary care providers; and,
- It promotes continuity of care, particularly important in situations where patients or their caregivers are sick.

Thank you for your consideration and your hard work on behalf of our great state. Please feel free to reach out with any questions: sfrick@chcact.org or 860.667.7820.