

Chris O'Brien

From: Nancy A. Black <nancyann310@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, July 13, 2020 9:04 PM
To: Chris O'Brien
Attachments: insurance companies and telemedicine.docx

I have attached written testimony regarding the need for telemedicine to continue to safely treat ever increasing mental health needs with HIPPA telemedicine sites.

Thank you for making this written testimony available to all who will be considering this legislation and voting on it.

Respectfully yours,

Nancy A. Black

Nancy A. Black, MSW, LICSW

Website: <http://www.you-can-succeed.org> <http://www.portsmouthcounselingcenter.org>

Email: nancyann310@gmail.com

401-835-3854

**Nancy A. Black, LICSW 401-835-3854
Portsmouth Counseling Center
2444 East Main Road,
Portsmouth RI 02871**

July 13, 2020

**Re: Health Insurance Companies to Continue to Allow Telemedicine for
Mental Health Visits**

**I would like to thank you for all you have done for the state of Rhode Island
during this pandemic.**

**I am writing today to ask you to pass legislation for health insurance
companies to pay for telehealth with their contracted providers through June
30,2021.**

**I am very concerned about clients and therapist being asked to return to
office space for face to face visits.**

**My name is Nancy Black. I am a licensed independent clinical social worker
(LICSW) working within a private practice setting (Portsmouth Counseling
Center). I have been treating clients (ages pre school through senior citizens)
for mental health issues in Rhode Island since 1991. I have a large Medicare
and Medicaid population of clients who are afraid of exposure to COVID 19 if
they return for in person office visits.**

**I am working with a HIPPA compliant site, Doxy.me utilizing telemedicine to
address serious and growing mental health needs since the start of the
pandemic.**

**I am part of a private practice group of nine psychotherapists. We see a large
number of patients every day. Collectively we see over 100 patients daily
ranging from children to seniors and many who are medically compromised.**

**At baseline our clients suffer from anxiety, depression, and PTSD. Given the
pandemic stressors client referrals and emergencies are increasing in
dramatic numbers. Many more people are at higher mental health risk. The**

Covid 19 Crisis has increased symptoms significantly and many of our clients are now much more isolated and fragile than ever.

I am concerned about putting our clients and essential mental health colleagues at risk for spread of COVID 19. In addition, I and many of our mental health practice therapists are over the age of 60 and our client pool has many seniors and medically fragile clients.

I feel it is irresponsible that insurance companies would unnecessarily put their providers and insurance subscribers at risk in this pandemic.

The Portsmouth Counseling Center facility, due to smaller space is unable to insure six foot distancing or in person screening for entrances and exits in our mental health facility and as many COVID 19 carriers are asymptomatic I do not know how to protect myself, my colleagues and our patients.

Of course, we would ALL prefer to see our patients in person, but I am heeding warnings from medical experts and hoping to keep myself safe.

If insurance companies end the telehealth option this will place very vulnerable clients at a much higher risk. I am dealing with families with opioid overdoses, anorexic clients losing more than 20% of body weight, domestic violence, suicidal potential and grief over deaths from COVID 19. We need to be able to safely address life threatening MH risks.

Please pass this legislation for insurance companies to keep their providers and their insurance subscribers safe with ongoing telemedicine as an option for MH treatment

Please ask them NOT to place our clients and us, as mental health providers, in dangerous and unsafe situations where we cannot guarantee our safety or our clients' safety.

I am happy to provide further documentation or data to clarify the essential need for MH telemedicine visits to continue. Thank you again for your ongoing efforts and support

With my utmost Respect and with my deep appreciation for all you do,

Nancy A. Black, LICSW Email address: nancyann310@gmail.com