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Date: 07/14/2020.

To,

Honorable Marvin Abney,

Chair of Finance, RI.

My name is Kazi Salahuddin, MD. I am a Child, Adolescent and Adult Psychiatrist practicing in RI for over 20 years. I am currently the Medical Director of Woonsocket based Community Care Alliance which is a nonprofit Community Mental Health Center. As an agency we provide a variety of services ranging from mental health services to children, families, adults including chronically ill patients in residential and outpatient programs along with emergency services including the BH Link located in East Providence.

In my opinion, TeleHealth was "God sent". Telehealth provided a safe and effective means to provide services to our sick and vulnerable clients during this pandemic. Without Telehealth there would have been no safe alternative to reach out to hundreds of patients who would have gone untreated by virtue of which there would have been a huge additional burden on Emergency rooms and Hospitals as well as increase in the exposure to the virus, making the pandemic even worse.

We serve an under-served population. Resources including transportation and access to health care is often a challenge for many of our clients. Without telehealth many of these clients would have gone untreated and as a result would have suffered needlessly.

Clients who are medically compromised are especially vulnerable to infections and using tele health is a strong means to keep them and others safe in the community from unnecessary exposure.

Some of our physicians and staff are also medically compromised and high risk. Without telehealth they would not have been able to provide care to their patients, overburdening the already stretched health care system.

Telehealth has provided an easy access to health care for our clients / patients which eliminates many barriers especially transportation, travel times, inability to keep multiple appointments or not being able to leave home due to unavailability of child care etc. It also makes it easy for the clients to contact their health care providers in emergencies. This not only helps provide immediate access to clients and better health care but also helps decrease the number and cost of ER visits, not to mention the long wait times in ER's.

Going forward, I strongly urge this respected committee to consider continuing telehealth services which is essential and the wave of future, which is already here. It provides flexibility as well as another effective tool in the delivery of health care. It's also important to keep the rates intact for these services to be feasible.

Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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