

Chris O'Brien

From: rdequattro rdequattro@cox. <rdequattro@cox.net>
Sent: Tuesday, July 14, 2020 9:54 PM
To: Chris O'Brien
Subject: House Bill No. 7171

Dear Christopher O'Brien

I am writing to support House Bill No. 7171.

I support the request of the Governor that a new article entitled "Relating to Telemedicine" be included in the FY 2021 Appropriations Act.

I also support the Interstate Medical Licensure compact Act.

BOTH aspects of this bill are important for safety reasons, as well as for increased accessibility to mental health counseling.

Here are some more thoughts around telehealth that I shared with others:

On Wednesday (7/15) Rhode Island's House Finance Committee will hold a hearing on important state healthcare reforms, including the proposal to make the Affordable Care Act's protections for people with existing conditions part of state law and to extend access to telemedicine during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

I support the budget articles that will be presented before House Finance on Wednesday to codify ACA protections in state law and to extend telemedicine for the duration of the pandemic. I hope this will be a first step to make these provisions permanent.

I have been licensed as a mental health counselor in the state of Rhode Island for 19 years, and currently have a private practice. I have been counseling clients virtually, using video and telephone conferencing capabilities since March and have found it to be both invaluable and successful. Telehealth has been an excellent way to for my clients to have access to therapy with me during the pandemic. Safety is of utmost importance during this time. There are other services that have no choice but to be in person, but therapy can be provided through telehealth the same as in person therapy.

I have found that telehealth has removed other barriers to accessing mental health counseling as well. Some examples are problems with transportation, scheduling, illness, and lack of childcare.

Here is an article that also supports telehealth/teletherapy: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/teletherapy>

Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

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