



# Uniform Law Commission

The National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws

## RHODE ISLAND COMMISSION ON UNIFORM STATE LAWS

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Health and Human Services Committee  
Rhode Island House

Re: Uniform Telehealth Act (UTA)—testimony in support of H7149

Dear Madam Chair and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of this bill on behalf of the State of Rhode Island's Commission on Uniform State Laws. For over 100 years, the State Commission has been part of the Uniform Law Commission. The ULC is a government organization composed of commissions from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Rhode Island has no comprehensive statutory authority for telehealth. The UTA fills that gap by authorizing a practitioner to provide telehealth services if the services are consistent with Rhode Island's professional practice standards. Therefore, this bill also dovetails with House Leadership's goal of increasing access to healthcare and confers significant benefits on both patients and healthcare practitioners:

- 1) It alleviates the severe shortage of healthcare professionals, especially those engaged in primary care, nursing, social work, and mental health care.
- 2) It improves healthcare equity, by making it much easier for underserved communities to obtain healthcare.
- 3) It reduces the burden on hospital emergency rooms and hospitals, which are often the place where patients with unmet medical needs seek care.
- 4) The bill creates pathways for out-of-state practitioners to treat patients across state lines:
  - a) For practitioners who want to do telehealth across state lines on a regular basis:

- (1) A self-funding registration system, with strict eligibility standards.<sup>1</sup>
- (2) A mandate that out-of-state practitioners submit to jurisdiction and discipline by the Rhode Island licensing board under the same procedures that apply to Rhode Island licensed or certified providers.
  - ii) Obtaining a license or certification under existing law.
  - b) A practitioner may also provide follow-up care to existing patients, consult with other practitioners, or provide opinions or specialty assessments.
- 5) To ensure the safety of the patient, the practitioner must comply with:
  - a) Rhode Island's professional practice standards.
  - b) Applicable federal or Rhode Island law.

For these reasons, we urge you to approve this bill and recommend passage.

We will do our best to answer any questions you may have.

Very truly yours,

*Thomas S. Hemmendinger*

Thomas S. Hemmendinger, Chair

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<sup>1</sup> Section 23-77.1-7(d) of the bill authorizes each board to set the registration fee to cover the costs of the system and requires the General Treasurer to segregate the funds for the benefit of the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH).