



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Monday, February 26, 2024**

HB 5198, An Act Concerning Telehealth

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 5198, An Act Concerning Telehealth**. CHA supports the bill.

Connecticut hospitals are critical to their communities. They are confronting the challenges posed by a post-pandemic healthcare system with an exemplary healthcare workforce that continues to provide outstanding care. But challenges remain. Hospitals are treating sicker patients, it continues to be challenging to hire and retain staff, and the financial headwinds are grave. Through it all, hospitals are steadfast, providing high-quality 24-hour care for everyone who walks through their doors, focusing on making Connecticut's healthcare system more equitable, and driving world-class innovation right here in Connecticut.

Telehealth uses technology to connect patients to a wide variety of vital healthcare services and enables access to primary care physicians, specialists, and a variety of other providers. It facilitates patient and clinician contact in support of diagnosis and treatment, behavioral health and rehabilitative therapy, and routine monitoring, advice, reminders, and education. Telehealth helps ensure that options are available for patients to receive the right care, at the right place, at the right time.

Patient care has benefitted greatly as a result of the passage of **Public Act 21-9**, which preserved the expansion in telehealth coverage and flexibilities introduced in response to the pandemic. Although the pandemic was the catalyst for these changes, Public Act 21-9 demonstrated the state's recognition that telehealth is an essential method for delivering healthcare services.

HB 5198 would extend the telehealth coverage and related flexibilities established in Public Act 21-9 until June 30, 2027. Although aspects of telehealth coverage will continue to evolve, the basic coverage and flexibilities established in Public Act 21-9 are an essential foundation that should be preserved as minimum standard coverage.

CHA supports the proposed extension but would encourage the Committee to consider amending the bill to make the provisions permanent.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.