

Michael S. Dixon, Ph.D.
PSYCHOLOGIST/SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

126 Everett Road
Auburn, Maine 04210

207 / 783-3052
MichaelSDixonPhD@gmail.com

May 20, 2021

Testimony on LD# 791

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee. My name is Michael S. Dixon, Ph.D. and I have been providing mental health services in Maine since 1974, for most of that time as a Maine-licensed psychologist. Earlier this month, I testified before this committee on several telehealth bills which had been submitted. Today, I would like to follow up with some information regarding why parity of reimbursement is so important for an independent practitioner, such as myself. I realize that this information may not apply to all health care providers, for example, a physician who is working for a health care system, and surrounded by a variety of support staff, who are also employees of the health care system. That might mean that the reviewing and communicating to patients of routine lab results that are within normal limits may be assigned to support staff, and done free of charge, which would be part of the process, but does not warrant a separate charge to either the patient or to the patient's health care company.

But my situation and that of many providers of mental health services is quite different, because I am a sole proprietor, whose only product I have to sell is my time. Whether I perform the service using an audio-visual HIPAA-compliant telehealth app or in-person, there are not savings involved. I am still solely responsible for my costs of doing business. I still need to generate enough business to also pay myself a livable wage, including funding my own health care coverage and savings for retirement.

Telehealth is a wonderful system for delivering psychotherapy, one that our patients truly appreciate. Please allow professionals like myself to continue to use this service delivery method, by recognizing that parity of reimbursement is a big part of what makes that service available to our patients. Thank you for considering my testimony.