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To: House Committee on Health Care
From: Rick Barnett, Legislative Chair, Past-President, Vermont Psychological Association

Re: S.50 Telehealth - An act relating to insurance coverage for telemedicine services delivered in or outside a health care facility

To the members of the House Committee on Health Care:

The American Psychological Association (APA), the Vermont Psychological Association (VPA), and the American Telemedicine Association (ATA) endorse the use of online mental health services. An exhaustive list of research and professional associations that support and provide practice standards and guidelines is at:

- <http://www.apadivisions.org/division-31/news-events/blog/health-care/standards-telehealth.pdf>

The Board of Psychological Examiners rules on “telepractice” can be found at:

- http://vtprofessionals.org/opr1/psychologists/rules/Administrative_Rules_filed_and_Pending_LCAR%20a_pproval_Clean.htm (6.4 – Telepractice)

The Vermont Psychological Association (VPA) supports S.50 on Telehealth. Since the 2012 passing of Act 107, the VPA has been actively working with the Department of Financial Regulation, the Green Mountain Care Board, and legislators in both House and Senate to amend Act 107 in the following ways:

- Replace the term “Telemedicine” with the term “Telehealth” or define both terms according to the American Telemedicine Association which views telemedicine and telehealth to be interchangeable terms.
- Remove requirement that patients must be located at a health care facility in order for mental health providers to submit insurance claims for reimbursement for telehealth services rendered.
- To expand the list of providers and related covered services that are eligible to provide telehealth services to include all licensed mental health and substance abuse providers.

As health care reform unfolds and integrated care/medical home models are implemented, collaborative care models must include access to as many qualified mental health professionals as possible. One way to help facilitate this may be to allow for the provision of telehealth services by licensed mental health practitioners in their private office and/or home office setting. Failure to allow for this provision may limit access to mental/behavioral health care and work against the success of integrated care models.

Sincerely,

Rick Barnett, Psy.D.
Legislative Chair, Past-President, VPA