

**April 25, 2025**

**Chair Lyons, Vice Chair Larocque Gulick, and the distinguished members of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee:**

My name is Sean Bradley, and I am here today as a member of the Strategy team for Hazel Health, the nation's largest provider of school-centered telehealth services. I am pleased to offer this written testimony, on behalf of Hazel Health.

At Hazel Health, we work to bridge the gap between schools, families, and healthcare providers. By bringing healthcare into both the school and home environment, we ensure that all students—regardless of their insurance status or socioeconomic background—have access to the services they need to stay healthy and thrive academically. As a mental health professional, I have seen firsthand the profound impact that accessible, high-quality healthcare can have on a child's development and educational success.

We are currently operating in 20 states, serving over 5 million students including the New England State of Rhode Island.

**The Most Accessible Care for All Students**

One of the cornerstones of our model is providing telehealth services at no out-of-pocket cost to families. This makes healthcare accessible to all students, regardless of their insurance coverage or ability to pay. The results speak for themselves:

- Over 410,000 hours of learning have been recovered as students are able to return to class after a physical health visit.
- Absenteeism has decreased significantly, and students are more engaged in their education.
- Our diverse network of providers, who speak over 21 languages, helps ensure that students and families from all backgrounds have the care and support they need.

By offering healthcare in the places where students spend the most time—at school and at home—Hazel Health ensures that students remain in class, engaged, and ready to learn. This holistic approach has the potential to improve not just short-term academic outcomes, but long-term health and well-being.

**School-Centered Mental Health: Intervening When It Matters Most**

As a mental health professional, I am particularly concerned by the state of mental health care for children. As you might know, the 2023 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey revealed that a third of Vermont high school students experience poor mental health, and almost half don't believe they matter to their communities. Nearly one in five children nationwide experiences mental health challenges, yet the vast majority of them—about 80%—go untreated. This gap in care can have a profound effect on a child's ability to succeed academically, socially and ultimately in the workforce.

Through Hazel Health's teletherapy program, we offer students in participating school districts barrier-

free access to mental health services in school and at home. Our teletherapy model has been shown in third-party studies to yield clinically significant outcomes for students struggling with mental health challenges. By intervening early—when the brain is still developing—we can make a lasting impact on a child's trajectory, helping them succeed in school and beyond.

Providing early intervention is not just good for students' health, it is good for their futures. By addressing mental health needs at the critical developmental stages, we set students up for success in their education, post-secondary pursuits, careers, and ultimately, their lives. We believe that building a comprehensive mental health ecosystem that includes school based health centers, telehealth to assist with gaps and desert areas, and well connected community partners will strongly impact student overall mental health.

## **The Case for Expanding School-Centered Telehealth Services**

The data we've collected supports the effectiveness of this model. Hazel Health has proven that when students have access to healthcare, they are more likely to remain in school, be engaged, and perform better academically. The impact is clear:

- 92% of students report positive outcomes after utilizing our telehealth services.
- Over 5,130 schools, reaching more than 5 million students nationwide, have partnered with Hazel Health.
- Hazel Health's teletherapy services have led to a 60% reduction in absenteeism and a 50% decrease in disciplinary actions.

We believe that expanding access to telehealth services in schools is not just a matter of convenience—it is a matter of public health. By ensuring that every child has access to the care they need, we can improve not only their educational outcomes, but their long-term health and well-being. These improved outcomes will result in higher graduation rates and connectedness with their career potential.

## **Conclusion**

The model that Hazel Health has developed is a proven, sustainable solution that makes healthcare more accessible and impactful for students. Working together as part of a comprehensive ecosystem with school based health centers and community providers increases the trajectory of children's lives for the better.

Together, we can ensure that every child, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to succeed and lead a healthy, fulfilling life.

Hazel Health stands ready to partner with the Vermont Legislature and state agencies to implement a program to serve K-12 students statewide that would improve the lives and wellbeing of young Vermonters.

**Thank you for your time.**

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