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Senator Lesser, Rep. Gilchrest, Senator Seminara, Rep. Case, and members of the Human Services Committee:

Last year, I convened the Comptroller's Healthcare Cabinet, a group of providers, medical professionals, and community advocates to discuss ideas to expand healthcare access for every Connecticut resident. Eight different subcommittees put forward recommendations, and those recommendations became the basis for our first annual Healthcare Cabinet Report which we released in January.

Unsurprisingly, Medicaid (and the need to increase Medicaid rates) was discussed at length in each subcommittee. Two specific recommendations – reimbursement for e-consultations and a broad rate increase – were the two biggest recommendations of our Urban Healthcare Subcommittee chaired.

That's why today, I'm proud to testify in strong support of H.B 5459: An Act Increasing Rates of Medicaid Reimbursement Rates for Certain Providers.

Reimbursing providers for e-consultations and ensuring that Medicaid providers are reimbursed their costs makes financial sense for the State of Connecticut and makes moral sense to implement for the one million Medicaid enrollees in Connecticut.

E-consultations are secure, online communications between a primary care provider and a specialist. Rather than having to wait months for a specialist appointment, a patient can benefit from a specialist's opinion within 24-72 hours. In addition to eliminating the need for a costly face to face visit with a specialist, an e-consult allows the primary care provider to address a patient's needs promptly, without the patient having to take time from work and arrange transportation for a specialty visit. Numerous studies across the country have shown that ~80% of specialty visits can be resolved via e-consult—with resultant huge savings in Medicaid dollars and improved access to care for our patients. This bill would create the financial scaffolding to allow providers to offer e-consults and greatly expand the number of CT residents who are able to get the specialty care attention that they deserve while saving the state millions in dollars.

In our Healthcare Cabinet Report, the Urban Subcommittee referenced a 2018 study analyzing the impact of e-consults on a targeted group of Connecticut Medicaid claims for 8 specialties within a six-month timeframe demonstrating a very conservative projected annual cost avoidance of \$6.5 million for Connecticut Medicaid. Why? Because e-consults are much less costly than face to face visits with specialists and often avoid much of the "downstream" costs such as redundant testing, ED visits due to delayed diagnoses, etc.

Finally, I strongly support the Committee's over-arching goal of increasing Medicaid rates. Coming out of the pandemic and given our rapidly changing health care ecosystem, there is no better time for Connecticut to make a long-overdue investment in our Medicaid program by raising our rates than right now.

H.B 5459 is a win for Medicaid patients, a win for providers, and a win for the State of Connecticut. I strongly urge its passage.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sean Scanlon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sean Scanlon
State Comptroller