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Chair Salinas and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for reading this invited testimony and considering its contents as you make important decisions related to the COVID-19 crisis and particularly Telehealth Services in Oregon.

I am a doctorally prepared psychiatric nurse practitioner in private practice serving children, adolescents, and adults. I am finding that patients respond well to telepsychiatry, some even prefer it to in person sessions (ex: if child has autism or severe anxiety I'm able to observe them in the home and for individuals who lack childcare). It is a service I plan to continue to offer and my hope is that insurers will cover it at in-person rates.

The acuity level of many of the prospective patients calling me, some from around the state, during the pandemic is very intense. I am now sometimes seeing patients until 7pm and on my administrative day to meet the needs of those who are either frontline workers (I treat a lot of healthcare providers or children of healthcare providers) or those experiencing worsening mental health symptoms. I am trying hard to support the community during this crisis. The childcare is a very real issue, particularly for my healthcare provider or teacher patients/parents. The idea of being paid less to deal with more intense work that is both physically and emotionally demanding is not palatable to me. I also have to continue to pay my rent and utilities at the office I'm not using given I am working from home-so my overhead has not decreased.

My hope is that Telehealth will continue to be covered as it is for at least the next few months; from a public health perspective. By seeing our patients virtually, mental health providers are helping to reduce the spread of coronavirus and keep people safe. We are not like surgeons who need the person to physically be present. There has been some great coverage of telepsychiatry in major news sources such as the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, and The Washington Post.

Thank you for your time; I hope you will support continued full coverage of Telehealth services that benefit all Oregonians. Please feel free to contact me if I may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Tiffany McClean, DNP, PMHNP, LPC