



TO: The House Health Care Committee
FROM: Larry Conner MA, LPC, COPACT President
DATE: February 4, 2021
SUBJECT: HB 2508

Chair Prusak, Vice-Chairs Salinas, and Hayden, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Larry Conner. I am a Licensed Professional Counselor and the President of COPACT. COPACT advocates for the 6,300 Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs), Marriage Family Therapists (LMFTs), and Registered Interns who provide clinical mental health diagnosis and treatment to over 100,000 Oregonians each week through their work in agencies, universities, corrections, health clinics, rehabilitation, and private psychotherapy practices.

COPACT is proud to support HB 2508, which requires Medicaid and commercial insurance to reimburse for telehealth services beyond the pandemic. These flexibilities are currently in place due to Governor Brown's Executive Order which calls upon providers and insurers to utilize telehealth to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and achieve more equitable care. Because the cost to provide teletherapy services is nearly the same as in-person services, COPACT urges the committee to maintain reimbursement parity for teletherapy services.

Not passing HB 2508 and returning to pre-COVID-19 telehealth policies would be detrimental to patients across the state, as telehealth has vastly improved their access to care by eliminating burdensome commutes from patients in rural and traffic-dense urban areas. We expect telehealth services to continue to be in demand in mental health space, as patients like the option and it has actually decreased the rate of cancellations.

COPACT has been supportive of telehealth parity since its introduction into the State Legislature and is proud to continue our support. Last December, COPACT wrote a supportive letter to extend the Telehealth Parity agreement when its first expiration date neared. We were thankful and relieved to see the State continue their partnership with health insurance companies to expand telehealth options through at least June 30, 2021.

We urge the legislature to extend telehealth coverage permanently, and to maintain reimbursement parity requirements for LPCs and LMFTs providing telehealth services.

Sincerely,

Larry Conner MA LPC
COPACT President