March 10, 2020

Department of Social Services
Office of the Commissioner
55 Farmington Ave.
Hartford, CT 06105

Dear Commissioner Gifford:

On behalf of our clients enrolled in HUSKY medical coverage and in light of the challenges presented by COVID-19, we urge you to exercise your authority to broadly cover telehealth services for HUSKY enrollees. Not only would doing so help patients who would not otherwise have access to medical advice and consultation, it would likely help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases by reducing the number of unnecessary in-person visits to medical facilities.

The outbreak of a new communicable virus has triggered extraordinary measures to contain its spread, including closing the Capitol for deep cleaning, restricting government travel, and advising individuals who have traveled outside the state to self-quarantine. Reducing the need for patients to travel to medical facilities, where there is a likelihood of spreading the virus to individuals with compromised immune systems, would be more than prudent. Telehealth services, which allow patients to consult with their medical providers remotely, could ensure patients receive needed care and reduce the spread of infection.

Last year, the legislature and the governor granted you authority to “provide coverage of telehealth services … notwithstanding any provision of the regulations of Connecticut state agencies that would otherwise prohibit coverage of telehealth services.” Public Act 19-76. While this is appropriate in any event, the current crisis compels the broad use of this authorization. We urge you to exercise this authority. Private insurers cover telehealth, as does Medicare. Now is the time to widely include telehealth services as a specific set of services paid for by HUSKY.

Sincerely,

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