

**Testimony in support of HB20-1113**

Attn: Members of the Public Health Care and Human Services Committee

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important bill, a modest yet critically important stride toward providing better mental health care for many Coloradans facing the greatest obstacles to receiving these life-saving services.

I worked for more than two years on the Let's Talk Colorado campaign to reduce the stigma surrounding seeking mental health treatment and am well-versed in the barriers many Coloradans face to seeking and receiving care. I'm sure it's not lost on anyone on this committee that rural Coloradans are becoming more and more isolated from the services others take for granted as resources are stretched thinner and thinner, foremost among these being access to healthcare.

I'm sure if we all take half a moment to consider our own beliefs and those we've been exposed to throughout our lives that we can likewise understand how difficult it can be for anyone to admit that their mental health is making life hard, and how it can be harder still to reach out and seek help.

Just as every Coloradan deserves access to the same educational and career opportunities, we should all have access to localized mental health care resources, to care for ourselves and those we know and love. This bill, by providing online access to local contacts, information and resources, goes a long way to reaching those hit hardest by the dwindling access to healthcare outside Colorado's metropolitan centers and the I-25 corridor.

Being able to anonymously and privately start the process of improving our own mental health can also encourage many who otherwise wouldn't seek care for fear their car would be recognized outside a clinic, or that their employer would think less of them if they took time off to go to therapy.

Think of the difference an initiative like this can make in the lives of those among us, our neighbors, our coworkers, our friends and family, whose lives could be changed forever by being able to take that first step toward a happier, healthier and more productive life, all by logging onto the internet.

I encourage you all to think of the people you've known throughout your lives, I'm sure each of you know or have known someone who struggled (or still grapples with) challenges to their well-being and happiness, if indeed you haven't yourselves.

Think of the opportunity you have today, to help so many Coloradans by setting this bill on the path to becoming law.

Thank you for your time and your diligent work to provide a better, healthier future for our neighbors, friend and family.

Tom Skelley

17937 E. Amherst Ave.

Aurora, CO 80013