



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

February 13, 2020

Senate Bill 402: Health Care Practitioners - Telehealth

POSITION: SUPPORT

Senator Lam, Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 402 – Health Care Practitioners – Telehealth.

This legislation would authorize certain health care practitioners to establish a practitioner-patient relationship through certain telehealth interactions under certain circumstances; requiring a health care practitioner providing telehealth services to be held to the same standards of practice that are applicable to in-person settings; requiring a health care practitioner to perform a clinical evaluation appropriate for the condition the patient presents before providing certain treatment or issuing a prescription through telehealth; etc.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland.

Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

This legislation helps remove barriers for some of Maryland's most vulnerable populations as well as increases the capacity for the rural regions of Maryland to provide much-needed services to rural residents, specifically in the health professional shortage areas of the state.

The 2018 Maryland Rural Health Plan (www.MDRuralHealthPlan.org), an extensive assessment of Maryland's rural health needs, cites the telehealth as a viable solution to many of the access barriers across our 18 rural jurisdictions.

MHRA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we thank you for your consideration.

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