



Committee: Senate
Bill Number: SB 402
Title: Health Occupations - Telehealth
Hearing Date: February 13, 2020
Position: Support

The Maryland Nurses Association (MNA) supports *Senate Bill 402 – Health Occupations – Telehealth*. The bill establishes a broad and consistent regulatory framework for telehealth for all health care practitioners. Nurses work with many other types of health care practitioners in hospitals, community health centers, and other health care facilities. It makes sense that all health care practitioners are operating under the same general telehealth requirements.

Under our Total Cost of Care Model in Maryland, it is critical that health care providers be able to utilize telehealth to communicate efficiently and effectively with patients. According to the American Hospital Association Center for Health Innovationⁱ:

“Telehealth and digital health care enable a model of care that is ubiquitous and seamless, more affordable and integrated into patients’ lives. In the shift to demand-driven health care, telehealth becomes the patient’s first — and most frequent — point of access for urgent care, triage for emergent conditions, specialty consults, post-discharge management, medication education, behavioral health counseling, chronic care management and more.”

Telehealth includes both synchronous and asynchronous communications (video chat/electronic messaging within a patient portal). Telehealth can be used to:

- Increase access to primary care services, urgent care, and specialist services in shortage areas;
- Support facilities and programs in managing the use of their ambulatory care space. If some patients can be treated through telehealth, it is a more efficient use of resources; and
- Increase patient satisfaction. Patients can probably be seen more quickly and without having to take time off from work.

The Veterans Administration was an early adopter of telehealth strategies. Now, the VA reports that 12% of their patients received a portion of their services through telehealth.ⁱⁱ

We understand that nurses, including advanced practice registered nurses, may already provide telehealth in either a synchronous or asynchronous manner. However, the Nurse Practice Act is not explicit. This legislation would codify what is already allowed, and it mitigate the confusing about what is allowed in all the different health settings where nurses work.

We ask for a favorable report on this legislation. If we can provide additional perspective on telehealth, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.

ⁱ The American Hospital Association Center for Health Innovation. "Telehealth: A Path to Virtual Integrated Care". February 2019. https://www.aha.org/system/files/media/file/2019/02/MarketInsights_TeleHealthReport.pdf

ⁱⁱ The Department of Veterans Affairs. Telehealth Fact Sheet. https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/news/VA_Telehealth_Services.pdf