

SB 402 Health Care Practitioners – Telehealth
Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee
FAVORABLE
February 13, 2020

Good Afternoon Chairman Pinsky and Vice Chairwoman Kagan and members of the Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee. My name is Tammy Bresnahan and I am the Director of Advocacy for AARP MD. As you may know, AARP Maryland is one of the largest membership-based organizations in the Free State, encompassing almost 900,000 members. I am here today representing AARP MD and its members in support of **SB 402 Health Care Practitioners – Telehealth**. We thank Senator Kagan for bringing this bill forward.

AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, nationwide organization that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse.

SB 402 authorizes a health care practitioner (an individual licensed under the Health Occupations Article) to establish a practitioner-patient relationship through a telehealth interaction through asynchronous telehealth interaction, an exchange of information between a patient and a health care practitioner that does not occur in real time, including the secure collection and transmission of a patient's medical information, clinical data, clinical images, laboratory results, and self-reported medical history. SB 402 also includes synchronous telehealth interaction, an exchange of information between a patient and a health care practitioner that occurs in real time.

Telehealth holds great potential for helping seniors looking to maintain their independence and enjoy living at home longer. It offers a range of options to make healthcare easier and more accessible. From tracking vital signs with remote monitoring devices, to communicating easily with a nurse through a web portal, to receiving on-the-spot care from a doctor via video chat, telehealth aims to make life easier. Research shows that older adults prefer to remain in their homes for as long as they are able to do so.¹ Wherever people live, they need access to health care and support services—telehealth can play a part in enabling people to age in place.

Telehealth shows great potential for making healthcare more affordable, convenient, and self-directed, which may explain its rapid growth. According to AARP research, the telehealth industry

¹ Joanne Binette and Kerri Vasold, 2018 Home & Community-Based Preferences: A National Survey of Adults Age 18 Plus. Washington, DC. AARP Research, August, 2018. Available as of July 17, 2019 at, <https://www.aarp.org/research/topics/community/info-2018/2018-home-community-preference.html>

will reach \$36.2 billion by the year 2020, up from \$14.3 billion in 2013. While the industry reported only 350,000 users in 2013, around 7 million people are expected to use some form of telehealth in the year 2018.

For many caregivers, finding time to help manage their older family member's health issues can be difficult. Accompanying seniors to frequent doctor's appointments, coordinating care, and managing health records can prove challenging. Thankfully, telehealth may make the process easier for both seniors and their caregivers, helping both keep their independence. Many seniors and the adult children who serve as caregivers live far apart, and telehealth may help them communicate more easily.

Lastly, telehealth can help caregivers in practicing self-care, making the caregiving relationship more sustainable for both parties. Online therapy in particular shows great promise for helping caregivers get the support they need while caring for an older family member. Accessing a therapist from home can let them care for their own needs in order to continue helping their loved one.²

AARP supports SB 402 and respectfully requests the Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee issue a favorable report. For questions please contact Tammy Bresnahan at 410-302-8451 or at tbresnahan@aarp.org.

² <https://www.aginginplace.org/telehealth-and-seniors>