SB 502 – Health Insurance – Telehealth – Delivery of Mental Health Services – Coverage for Home Settings
Senate Finance Committee
February 19, 2020
Position on the Bill: SUPPORT

Submitted By: Maryland Telehealth Alliance

The Maryland Telehealth Alliance supports SB 502 – Health Insurance – Delivery of Mental Health Services – Coverage for Home Settings because it recognizes that requiring mental health patients to leave their homes for all therapy treatment, whether in-person or through telehealth, can be a significant barrier to improving mental health throughout the State.

Public policy in Maryland has long recognized that telehealth is a solution to shortages of health care in certain populations and under certain circumstances and historically has strongly supported telehealth initiatives, laws and regulations eliminating barriers to it. It is well known that there is a shortage of mental health providers throughout the State. In even shorter supply are mental health providers who make home visits. Teletherapy is increasingly utilized to fill these gaps in Maryland's mental health services.

Teletherapy delivered in the home can provide access to mental health care for Marylanders whose circumstances make it difficult for them to engage in crisis counseling or in a continuing program of therapy in person if they are limited to receiving that care only at Medicaid or private payor approved originating sites. Factors such as limited access to transportation, limited operating hours at clinics or other approved originating sites, mobility constraints, fears about leaving environments that make them feel safe, children home sick from school who shouldn't miss a regularly scheduled therapy session. These are a few examples of barriers to receiving care outside the home. No one needing mental health services should be denied that care simply because they need it delivered to them at home.

For these reasons, Maryland Telehealth Alliance supports SB 502 and requests a favorable report.