



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Finance Committee

February 19, 2020

Senate Bill 502 – Health Insurance – Telehealth – Delivery of Mental Health Services – Coverage for Home Settings

POSITION: SUPPORT

Senators Hershey and Ferguson, Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and members of the Finance Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 502 – Health Insurance – Telehealth – Delivery of Mental Health Services – Coverage for Home Settings.

This legislation would require the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to provide, subject to a certain limitation, mental health services appropriately delivered through telehealth to a patient in the patient's home setting; altering the definition of telehealth as it applies to certain provisions of law governing coverage of telehealth by certain insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations to include the delivery of mental health care services to a patient in a certain setting; 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.

The 2018 Maryland Rural Health Plan (www.MDRuralHealthPlan.org), an extensive assessment of Maryland's rural health needs, identifies access of care and providers as a priority in rural Maryland. The MRHP also cites repeatedly the importance and need for increased access to mental health services across our 18 rural jurisdictions.

As part of the formulation of the Maryland Rural Health Plan, focus groups of health care providers discussed telehealth services as an innovation that could improve access to care for Maryland's rural communities.

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

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