



**Re: House Bill 448, Healthcare Practitioners - Telehealth  
Dr. Patrick Carroll, Chief Medical Officer  
in Support**

Dear Chairwoman Pendergrass, Vice-Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk, and members of the Committee,

My name is Patrick Carroll and I'm the Chief Medical Officer for Hims & Hers, a direct-to-consumer digital health company. Our innovative platform connects consumers to state-licensed physicians for medical consultations focused on specific conditions that are largely stigmatized and where telemedicine can be safe and discreet.

You might not be familiar with who we are but chances are you know someone who is using our service. In less than two years, we have facilitated more than one million digital healthcare visits across the United States and have built a critical access point to everyday conditions that are often difficult to discuss or are stigmatized by society; conditions such as hair loss, erectile dysfunction, and acne among others.

In my role as Chief Medical Officer, I am responsible for ensuring the safety and clinical quality of the care that patients access through our platform. It's also my job and that of our company to always keep a vigilant eye on ways we can enhance care delivery models for patients who struggle with access or other barriers to treatment.

Prior to joining Hims & Hers, I served as the Chief Medical Officer at Walgreens where I supervised the retail clinics business, our health system collaborations, and various quality and safety programs.

My background in healthcare goes back many decades. I started my career as a physician working for a primary care group in the Northeast. I've twice spent extended periods of time working for the Indian Health Service in suboptimal conditions. And I got to know the ins-and-outs of value-based care as I was helping steer Hartford Healthcare through their transformation.

I write to you today to speak out in support of HB 448, a bill that establishes stronger standards for telemedicine and embraces telehealth as a means to ensure we are upholding the same level of care as an in-person setting.

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We have only recently begun to offer access to consultations in Maryland, starting at the end of January. This is because we've added live audio and video capabilities to our platform. Up to then, we were unable to offer access to care in Maryland because the current telemedicine statutes don't afford providers the ability to offer care asynchronously or through store-and-forward technology.

The feedback we've consistently received in Maryland and throughout the country is that patients prefer the efficiency and privacy an asynchronous visit offers compared to that of a live audio or video chat.

As patients we are often at the mercy of a physician's schedule, which rarely align to meet our demanding lives. Asynchronous care, especially for the conditions that are treated by the providers using our platform, gives consumers the flexibility and discretion to seek individualized care for historically stigmatized conditions.

When HB 448 is enacted, Maryland providers will have the flexibility to use tools like ours to offer asynchronous options to Maryland patients anywhere in the state and reach into communities in desperate need of access where none currently exists. This is, in our estimation, the most significant improvement this bill affords.

To help this Committee better understand how a platform like ours functions and how providers that have access our platform maintain the highest level of integrity and quality of care, I would like to provide some details into the process.

Hims and Hers is painstaking about the licensure and certification requirements for providers who wish to utilize our platform, and providers are only permitted to provide services to patients located in states in which the provider holds a state license to practice medicine. The platform's technology is designed to only connect a provider with patients in states in which the provider's state license has been verified.

It is important to emphasize that we only partner with outside medical groups that are aligned with our mission and have thoroughly vetted their providers to ensure safe, high-quality care is administered through our platform. In return, we provide best-in-class administrative support to ensure our partners have the resources they need and the most accurate data and information available to support their provision of high-quality, evidence-based medical care and treatment.

Providers who wish to use the platform are only approved by the medical groups after successfully completing a thorough credentialing process. When a provider expresses an

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interest in using the platform, he/she is required to submit an online application and a CV. This is followed by a phone screening. Next, the provider completes a written exercise that is evaluated for clinical quality and communication proficiency.

If the provider passes the initial screening and testing, their state license is verified and a thorough background check is administered by a third party. The report encompasses a providers practice history and flags significant findings or disciplinary actions in the National Practitioner Data Bank.

The data is then cross-referenced with both the HHS Office of Inspector General (OIG) List of Excluded Individuals and Entities as well as the System for Award Management. This is a necessary step to ensure individuals or entities have not been excluded from certain federal healthcare programs and also identifies any significant findings or disciplinary actions that may have resulted from improper practice. Needless to say, if any concerns are identified, the candidate is immediately disqualified.

If a provider passes the background report and meets the rigorous vetting standards, the provider is then individually evaluated by the physician owners of the medical groups who work with our platform.

Once approved, providers practicing on the platform undergo formal training to ensure they are adept with the technology being utilized and are educated on evidence-based clinical guidelines applicable to the conditions they treat. These clinical education programs are developed by highly-experienced physicians who are esteemed within their respective fields and are based upon the most recent evidence-based clinical standards. After their training is completed, all providers must conduct a supervised live visit to gauge their proficiency on the platform.

Before a provider begins practicing on the platform, they go through another round of identity verification by the third party e-Prescribing platform that processes any prescriptions that the providers may write. For any medications that are prescribed by providers using the platform, patients are given access to low cost prescription fulfillment services provided by licensed pharmacies who have been accredited by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy under the Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites (VIPPS) program. VIPPS program accreditation means these pharmacies must comply with stringent licensing requirements and regulations governing how and from where medications can be sourced.

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We also conduct periodic, independent third-party testing of medications dispensed by these pharmacies to ensure the quality and integrity of drug strengths and ingredients made available to our customers.

In addition to the initial credentialing and vetting that providers undergo, both our platform and the medical groups we work with maintain robust quality assurance programs designed to ensure quality of care and patient safety remains the highest priority.

To conclude, I hope you now have sufficient assurances that the providers on our platform are properly vetted and licensed to practice in Maryland as a requirement before they have any patient interaction.

Beyond the obvious benefits of expanded access and better price transparency, I strongly believe that telemedicine can create a discreet and safe environment where consumers can feel confident using platforms like ours to tackle their issues and not have to deal with the awkwardness that can come with going to a provider. Moreover, it provides a way for healthcare providers to likewise reap the benefits of greater convenience and scheduling flexibility in making care available to their patients.

I urge the Committee to give a favorable report on HB 448.

Sincerely,

*Pat Carroll, M.D.*

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