



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Health and Government Operations Committee

February 18, 2020

House Bill 448: Health Care Practitioners – Telehealth

POSITION: SUPPORT

Delegate Rosenberg, Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of House Bill 448 – Health Care Practitioners – Telehealth.

This legislation would authorize certain health care practitioners to establish a practitioner-patient relationship through certain telehealth interactions under certain circumstances; requiring a health care practitioner providing telehealth services to be held to the same standards of practice that are applicable to in-person settings; requiring a health care practitioner to perform a clinical evaluation appropriate for the condition the patient presents before providing certain treatment or issuing a prescription through telehealth; 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 jurisdictions, 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. As part of the formulation of the MD 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.

A Mayo Clinic study of telehealth's value to rural hospitals indicated significant benefits of telehealth practice as part of comprehensive treatment. A significant decrease was seen in the risk of death within 30 days in patients who benefited from telehealth services, as well as a decrease in 30-day readmission (www.mhealthintelligence.com/news/mayo-clinic-study-demonstrates-telehealths-value-to-rural-hospitals). Telehealth has been shown value in removing barriers to access to care for rural communities.

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

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