



UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 13, 2020

The Honorable Paul Pinsky
Chair of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West Miller Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Shane Pendergrass
Chair of the House Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Pinsky and Pendergrass:

I would like to express my full support of *Senate Bill 402/House Bill 448 – Health Care Practitioners – Telehealth*. The bill provides a consistent regulatory framework to promote the adoption of telehealth in Maryland. In order to ensure that every Marylander has access to their healthcare needs, we need to move forward with telehealth innovations in Maryland. Telehealth offers the opportunity to increase access to health care for all Marylanders. We have seen telehealth transform the health care system of providers, as it allows clinicians to reach people in their homes. Patients do not face the barriers of distance and scheduling in getting the health care services they need.

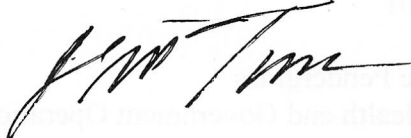
Under Maryland's Total Cost of Care Model, we need to support solutions to make our health care systems more efficient and effective. We cannot rely solely on the bricks and mortar model to meet Marylanders' needs. However, health care practitioners are sometimes uncertain about the parameters of Maryland's telehealth requirements. Senate Bill 402/House Bill 448 clarifies telehealth is allowed and provides appropriate patient protections. Whether a patient sees a health care practitioner in-person or through telehealth, patients will be assured of the same standard of care, including privacy protections.

In discussions with constituents and health care providers across my district, I have witnessed the great potential telehealth technologies play in improving healthcare outcomes. This is especially true for those in rural areas such as Western Maryland, where individuals experience increased difficulties in accessing the care they need, whether this be from lack of transportation options or availability of nearby providers. It is critical that we continue to address lapses in access to healthcare services, which is why we must prioritize the promotion of promising tools such as telehealth technologies to do so.

In looking to the future of telehealth in Maryland, we should consider the strong example of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), an early adopter of telehealth innovations. The VA offers telehealth services in over 50 specialties through more than 900 facilities, allowing them to provide services to 702,000 veterans in 2016. The VA uses a combination of synchronous and asynchronous telehealth technology to meet the somatic and behavioral health needs of veterans.[i]

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



David Trone
Member of Congress

[i] Department of Veterans Affairs. Telehealth Factsheet.
https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/news/VA_Telehealth_Services.pdf