



Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital

Where Children Go to Heal and Grow

An affiliate of University of Maryland Medical System and Johns Hopkins Medicine

March 4, 2020

House Bill 1208- Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Telehealth - Pilot Program

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Pendergrass and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Administration and the Department of Psychology at Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital, we are pleased to offer written testimony in support of House Bill 1208. (Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Telehealth - Pilot Program). We strongly support the initiative to increase access to telepsychology services to Maryland Medicaid patients in their homes.

The mission of Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital is to maximize the health and independence of the children and families we serve. Pediatric Psychology is an important component of our services that is in high demand among our patient population. However, there are often significant barriers to patient attendance at hospital-based appointments. Patient and families report to our staff that they often cannot attend appointments because of a lack of access to affordable transportation, incompatibility with their existing work schedules, and conflicts with academic demands. In addition, we see patients who travel more than three hours for a one-hour appointment because they are unable to find providers close to their homes. As a result, a growing number of patients have requested appointments via telephone or videoconferencing. While commercial payers have begun to reimburse for telepsychology, children receiving Medicaid do not have access to this type of care as it is not covered. In 2017, the Mt. Washington Pediatric Foundation agreed to fund a limited number of Medicaid families who would benefit from remote mental health services via telepsychology. This internal grant was intended to target families with significant geographic, financial, educational and physical barriers to consistent in-person attendance at our facility. The grant has covered services:

1. For Medicaid families where the parents do not have transportation, and who cannot use Medicaid transportation because it does not allow siblings;
2. For patients who attend college in Maryland and have been able to remain with their current therapist;

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3. For families where the parents both work and attend school, and cannot spare the time to drive to the hospital, but can make the child available at home;
4. For patients in our Diabetes, primary care and other medical clinics, who are more likely to adhere to their medical regimens if they have more frequent contact with their psychologist, and therefore avoid costly medical complications.
5. For patients in the MWPH specialty program in feeding disorders, where it has been a great advantage to be able to work with families in the actual setting in which they are feeding their children.

Families have reported that they are pleased with the quality of the technology and that they appreciate the convenience. They have demonstrated outcomes that are similar to what is seen for families and children provided with traditional therapy within our hospital.

Telepsychology services have been highly beneficial to the families that have been funded through the grant. HB 1208 would bring these benefits to more families who are unable to access the care they need for their children, improving health and avoiding future costs.

Thank you

SIGNED ELECTRONICALLY

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