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MARYLAND HEALTH CARE COMMISSION

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March 3, 2020

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Health Government and Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: House Bill 1208 – Health Insurance – Telehealth – Delivery of Mental Health Services – Coverage for Home Settings - INFORMATION

Dear Chair Pendergrass:

The Maryland Health Care Commission (Commission) would like to provide the House Health and Government Operations Committee with information related to House Bill 1208 (HB 1208). HB 1208 requires Medicaid to implement a pilot program to provide care for chronic conditions and behavioral health services through telehealth in a patient's home or any other location. The Commission believes that behavioral health services delivered through telehealth in a patient's home can help overcome obstacles to treatment. Given Medicaid's concerns about the potential budget impacts of this bill, the Commission recommends that the Committee consider adopting the amendments submitted by the Maryland Department of Health.

Since 2014, the Commission has awarded nearly 16 telehealth grants to qualified health care organizations to implement innovative telehealth pilots in the State. These grants assess the value of telehealth interventions across various care settings. Lessons learned inform future applications of telehealth, better practices and implementation efforts, and policies to support the advancement of telehealth. Findings also support planning and design of larger telehealth initiatives.

Telehealth, when used to provide mental health services in a patient's home, can address obstacles to care delivery. Arguably, one of the greatest impediments of seeking mental health services is stigma and misconceptions.¹ Virtual care in the privacy of a patient's home can help

¹ Understanding Stigma as a Mental Healthcare Barrier, National Alliance on Mental Illness, June 8, 2017, www.nami.org/Press-Media/In-The-News/2017/Understanding-Stigma-as-a-Mental-Healthcare-Barrie?feed=In-the-news.

Note: The Maryland Health Care Commission is an independent State agency. The position of the Commission may differ from the Maryland Department of Health.

address fears associated with seeking care in a health care setting. Telehealth supports patient recovery at home and can reduce the need for long distance travel, particularly in rural areas.² Mental health care providers use telehealth as a means to broaden their reach and availability to patients in need of care, including patients in areas which, without telehealth, have insufficient mental health care providers.

Use of telehealth among the Medicaid population is expected to increase as consumers and providers become more accepting of virtual health care visits. The Federal government has encouraged States to implement telehealth in Medicaid programs.³ Approximately fourteen States have adopted policies that explicitly allow for a Medicaid recipient's home to serve as an originating site under certain circumstances.⁴ A key challenge to the use of telehealth in the home include lack of high-speed internet in some parts of the State, particularly in areas with low population density. Provider willingness to participate in Medicaid, scheduling, and after hours availability should also be considered.

This pilot program would allow Medicaid to assess the use of telehealth for the delivery of mental health services in the patient's home. Findings from the pilot program will likely identify potential barriers to the program's success and changes in Medicaid policy that are necessary to support mental health services provided by telehealth in the home setting on a permanent basis. As noted above, the Commission recommends the Committee consider adopting the amendments offered by the Maryland Department of Health.

I hope you find this information useful. Please feel free to contact me at (410) 764-3566 or Ben.Steffen@maryland.gov, or Megan Renfrew, Government Affairs and Special Projects, at (410) 764-3483 or Megan.Renfrew@maryland.gov if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Ben Steffen
Executive Director
Maryland Health Care Commission

² Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2016). Rural Behavioral Health: Telehealth Challenges and Opportunities. In Brief, Volume 9, Issue 2, www.store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma16-4989.pdf.

³ Letter from Tim Hill, Acting Director, Department of Health and Human Services, to State Medicaid Director's, (June 11, 2018), www.medicaid.gov/federal-policy-guidance/downloads/smd18006.pdf.

⁴ Center for Connected Health Policy, Telehealth Medicaid & State Policy (Spring 2019), www.cchpca.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/cchp_report_MASTER_spring_2019_FINAL.pdf.

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