

February 16, 2021

The Honorable Senator Paul Pinsky, Chairperson

**EHEA Committee**

Maryland Senate

11 Bladen Street

Room 2, West Wing

Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: **SUPPORT FOR SB 568** – Health Care Practitioners - Telehealth - Out-of-State Health Care Practitioners

Dear Chairperson Pinsky and Distinguished Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

I want to thank you for taking my written statement of support for SB 568 on telehealth & out-of-state health care practitioners to be entered into the public hearing record. My name is Elizabeth Gil and I am a Counselor who resides and practices in Montgomery County, Maryland.

Telebehavioral health modalities are important to me because I have seen the benefits of barriers removed for clients accessing counseling services during this time of increased need for help. My clients worry less about driving during inclement weather, copays are waived, scheduling has become even easier, and my clients are able to connect with counselors that are not just in their immediate area or driving distance. Many of my clients are from other areas in Maryland that found me online and have stayed with me despite me relocating to another area in Maryland. If it weren't for telehealth, this would not have been possible and my clients would have had to find another counselor, which could have been incredibly challenging for those of them with specific types of issues. Telehealth has been a blessing for so many people and my clients ask me every week if I have any news on if it is going to stay.

We are still in the throes of a global pandemic and the need for health care and mental health services has never been greater. COVID-19 has revealed systemic flaws in our mental health services for providers and clients alike. It is imperative that we remove barriers to life saving services in a responsible and urgent manner.

This bill will authorize an out-of-state health care practitioner to provide telebehavioral health services to a patient located in the state in accordance with the state practice act. This legislation also requires the health occupations board to register an out-of-state health care practitioner, allowing for necessary oversight and monitoring of out-of-state practice.

While we are working to upload and implement the Counseling Compact in this state and throughout the U.S., this immediate action, removing barriers to critical supports, is essential for the wellbeing of Maryland residents, families, and a social services system overburdened by staggering need.

I strongly urge you to support telebehavioral health services and SB 568.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E Gil LCPC". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "E Gil" followed by the letters "LCPC".

Elizabeth Gil

MA, LCPC, NCC

Mirror Mental Health