

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 Roni K. White and I am a licensed professional counselor who resides and practices in Montgomery County, Maryland.

Telebehavioral health modalities are important to me as we remain in a pandemic and people remain in need of mental and behavioral health services. I currently provide services to first responders and medical professionals in trauma 1- ICU departments treating patients with COVID-19. It is essential for medical professionals, clients with compromised health, and clients exposed or battling COVID-19 have the ability and access to receive telebehavioral health to benefit from services in safety. Telebehavioral health is a modality that increases access to people in need who may have transportation insecurity, financial barriers, compromised health, a debilitating mental health condition, and/or temporary relocation preventing in-office service and therefore disrupting continuity of care.

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 blue ink, appearing to read "Roni K. White". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "R" and a distinct "W".

Roni K. White, NCC, LCPC
Psychotherapist
Apricity Wellness Counseling
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