

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 Catherine Eaton and I am a lifelong Maryland resident with a private clinical mental health practice in Montgomery County. I also work as a part-time remote clinical supervisor for Tri-County Youth Services Bureau, Inc., which provides school based counseling to students in Charles, St. Mary's and Calvert Counties.

With the increased use of Telebehavioral health modalities to maintain safety during the pandemic, I have seen clients better able to access services and attend sessions regularly than before the pandemic. My clients with Medicaid insurance no longer have to pay for childcare or juggle a long commute on public transportation in order to receive care. Although some clients still prefer in person sessions, having the flexibility to engage in Telehealth sessions in case of inclement weather or a sudden child's illness has greatly improved access to maintain and improve mental health and wellness. With the closure of schools, Tri-County Youth Services Bureau, Inc. has been able to continue needed services to children in elementary, middle and high schools.

During this current pandemic crisis 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. This is especially true among those residents in the lower social economic strata and/or racial minorities.

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.

I strongly urge you to support telebehavioral health services to continue after the pandemic emergency and SB 568.

Sincerely,

Catherine Eaton LCPC, GCDF, NCC
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Global Career Development Facilitator
National Board-Certified Counselor, Maryland License #LC5355
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Trustee, National Employment Counseling Association (NECA)
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