



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 Carol ZA McGinnis and I am an Associate Professor and Licensed Professional Counselor who resides and practices in Baltimore County, Maryland.

Telebehavioral health services are important to me because I understand how difficult it can be to find help that is needed by my fellow citizens. Many times, a client may be in need of immediate services and the wait time for an in-State practitioner can be much too long given the seriousness of their symptoms. Some diagnoses and problems require specialized mental health services (i.e. eating disorders, substance abuse, marriage/couple counseling) that may fall outside of the competence of an available provider. Allowing for the services across state lines provides our citizens increased access to counseling that is sorely needed now and in the foreseeable future.

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.

As president of the Maryland Counseling Association (MCA), I represent the will of professionals who work and live in the state of Maryland and strongly urge you to support telebehavioral health services and SB 568.

Sincerely,

Carol ZA McGinnis PhD, SIP, BC-TMH, NCC, LCPC  
2020-2021 Maryland Counseling Association (MCA) President  
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