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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 Ellen Dumer, LCPC and I am a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor who resides and practices in Harford County, Maryland.

Telebehavioral health modalities are important to me and to my clients as it provides easier access to services. This is especially true for clients who are elderly, disabled, without transportation, and those who have work or home responsibilities that impact their ability to take time out of their schedule for transportation to an appointment. It is widely known that mental health services have been limited by many factors over the past year, with COVID being the most frequent reason for increased anxiety and depression across all demographics. My inquiries from new clients for telehealth has increased significantly. The location of my practice is a factor as clients from neighboring states who would otherwise be able to travel prefer not to have in-person visits.

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,