



DATE: January 31, 2025

BILL NO: Senate Bill 372

BILL TITLE: Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2025

COMMITTEE: Senate Finance

POSITION: Support

Bill Summary:

Senate Bill 372 repeals the limitation on the period during which the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and certain insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations are required to provide reimbursement for certain health care services provided through telehealth on a certain basis and at a certain rate; etc.

Background:

Kennedy Krieger Institute is dedicated to improving the lives of children and young adults with developmental, behavioral, cognitive and physical challenges. Kennedy Krieger's services include inpatient, outpatient, school-based and community-based programs. Kennedy Krieger serves nearly 30,000 families per year.

Telehealth Services: Kennedy Krieger telehealth services include diagnoses, treatments, consultation, and education. Early in the pandemic, building on extant but limited telehealth services, we transitioned most outpatient services to telehealth, with a gradual decrease as in-person services increased. For FY 2024, telehealth represented approximately 40% of outpatient services. Behavioral health services make up over 50% of all telehealth services.

Rationale for telehealth parity:

Telehealth has greatly increased access and removed barriers to care for Kennedy Krieger patients with rare disorders and diseases. Published clinical studies conducted at Kennedy Krieger, as well as at other institutions, have supported improved access for our patient populations and comparable patient experience when services are provided both in-person and through telehealth.^{1,2} Telehealth is a critically important and effective part of the longitudinal care model required to optimize outcomes for our clinically complex populations.

Rationale for including audio-only in the definition of 'telehealth':

Barriers remain for access to telehealth. Although our patients connect with their provider through a secure, HIPAA-compliant web-based portal using audiovisual technology, some patients lack the appropriate Wi-Fi bandwidth to have a high-quality video connection. The opportunity to use audio-only technology is crucial for these families. It also prevents session disruption if there is a temporary technology problem. Making audio-only services permanent, in situations when the patient requests it and when the provider feels it is appropriate, is crucial to ensuring access to care that is not disrupted due to technical barriers.

Kennedy Krieger urges the committee to vote favorably on Senate Bill 372.

¹ Mosquera, R.A., Avritscher, E.B., Pedroza, C., Lee, K.H., Ramanathan, S., Harris, T.S., Eapen, J., Yadav, A., Caldas-Vasquez, M., Poe, M., Martinez Castillo, D.J., Harting, M.T., Ottosen, M.J., Gonzalez, T., & Tyson, J.E. (2021). Telemedicine for Children With Medical Complexity: A Randomized Clinical Trial. *Pediatrics*, 148.

² Jones, E.F., Kurman, J., Delia, E., Crockett, J., Peterson, R.J., Thames, J., Salorio, C.F., Kalb, L.G., Jacobson, L.P., Stone, J.C., & Zabel, T.A. (2022). Parent Satisfaction With Outpatient Telemedicine Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Repeated Cross-Sectional Study. *Frontiers in Pediatrics*, 10.