

Support

Senate Bill 402 – Health Care Practitioners – Telehealth

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

February 13, 2020

Planned Parenthood of Maryland (PPM) supports *Senate Bill 402 – Health Care Practitioners – Telehealth*. The bill provides a consistent framework, including consumer protections, for the provision of telehealth by all licensed health care practitioners.

PPM's involvement in this issue began because we wanted to follow the lead of many other states – including Texas, Georgia, and Alabama (see attached article) - which allow health care practitioners to prescribe birth control through electronic messaging in a secure patient portal (or an app). This is known as asynchronous prescribing. The Maryland Board of Physician's has telehealth regulations which are more restrictive than many other states.

We understand the Board of Physicians has offered an amendment that would allow asynchronous prescribing of birth control for new patients, but that the Board wants to continue to restrict asynchronous prescribing of any other medications for new patients. PPM asks the committee to recognize the value of telehealth beyond birth control:

- **Enhancing Access to PrEP:** Telehealth, including asynchronous platforms, can expand access to PrEP. As with birth control, many individuals may be anxious to ask their providers about PrEP in a face-to-face encounter, so asynchronous communication increases accessⁱ;
- **Improving Prenatal and Post-Partum Outcomes:** Providers, such as the Mayo Clinic, are using remote patient monitoring to improve health outcomes of prenatal and postpartum outcomesⁱⁱ;
- **Expanding Access in 50 Specialties in the Veterans Administration:** The Veterans Administration (VA) was an early adopter of telehealth, and now telehealth is available in over 900 facilities and across 50 specialties in the VA system.ⁱⁱⁱ

PPM asks for a favorable vote on the bill. We want Maryland to move forward, not backwards, in implementing telehealth. We care about the overall health, beyond birth control, of our patients. They deserve for their health care providers to be utilizing all the available communication tools. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at (443) 926-3443.

ⁱ Touger, R. & Wood, B.R. Curr HIV/AIDS Rep (2019) 16: 113. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11904-019-00430-z>.

ⁱⁱ <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/ob-nest>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/news/VA_Telehealth_Services.pdf

Nurx Expands to Alabama, Providing Affordable and Convenient Access to Birth Control and PrEP

The telemedicine company also welcomes Former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Regina Benjamin to its board of directors

NURX.

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Nurx →

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SAN FRANCISCO, Nov. 12, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- Nurx, the consumer healthcare company providing free online consultations with physicians and seamless home delivery of medications, is now available in Alabama. Nurx offers birth control and the HIV prevention medication PrEP, expanding access to convenient and high quality healthcare.



(PRNewsfoto/Nurx)

Today Nurx is also announcing that Alabama native and Former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Regina Benjamin, MD, MBA has joined the telemedicine company's board of directors. Dr. Benjamin will advise the company on a variety of critical public health issues and brings a strong background and commitment to patient-first preventive care.

"I have always been committed to ensuring everyone has access to quality affordable healthcare, regardless of their income or where they live," said Dr. Benjamin. "I look forward to working with the Nurx team as they break down barriers to care, increase access, and ultimately help improve the health of the nation."

Nurx is especially focused on those who traditionally lack access to affordable health care services and prescriptions. After consulting with a state-licensed provider, Nurx users can choose from over 50 birth control brands, many of which are affordable and cost-effective for those with and without insurance. In Alabama, more than half of all pregnancies are unintended (55 percent) and public spending for unplanned pregnancies in Alabama topped an estimated \$323 million in 2010.*

Committed to giving users full control of their sexual health, Nurx also of-

Nurx recently removed a critical barrier to PrEP treatment by offering an at-home test kit, allowing patients to discreetly complete all the testing required before initiating PrEP. Nurx is the only company that allows patients to consult with a provider to determine if PrEP is right for them, complete the necessary lab work, receive and fill the prescription, and have PrEP delivered straight to their door - all without needing to visit a physical health center.

"We're putting the power back in the people of Alabama's hands by making critical healthcare services much more accessible, all the while keeping it affordable," said Hans Gangekar, co-founder and CEO of Nurx. "State by state, our users get the care they need when they need it, regardless of their insurance status or where they live. We're especially thrilled to have Dr. Benjamin join our board as well. She has consistently demonstrated her commitment to community health and pushing for innovative healthcare solutions, and we're thrilled that Dr. Benjamin will bring these same insights to Nurx."

Nurx offers a seamless experience by integrating an owned-and-operated pharmacy, a network of partner physicians, and a telehealth app. Nurx is now available in 21 states and the District of Columbia, encompassing more than 70% of the US population. The full list includes California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and now Alabama. The company operates according to state and federal standards, including HIPAA.

About Nurx

Nurx is a telemedicine platform offering easy online access to doctors and seamless delivery of medications. No more time-consuming trips to the clinic and no more frantic pharmacy runs. We put you in control of your own health, empowering you to get the care you need, when you need it. Starting with birth control and PrEP for HIV prevention, Nurx is available in 21 states and counting. From diagnosis to delivery of prescriptions, we make every part of getting healthy and staying healthy, better.

Sources

*Guttmacher Institute

**Center for Disease Control and Prevention

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News

TELEMEDICINE BIRTH CONTROL APP NURX LAUNCH IN GEORGIA AND TENNESSEE

by Muriel Vega | August 14, 2018 | 0 comment

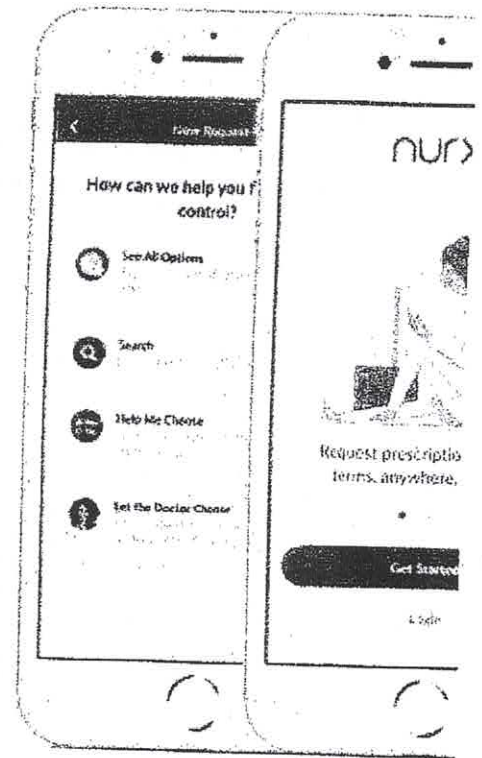


Telemedicine platform Nurx, which offers a quick consultation with medical providers who can prescribe birth control and HIV-prevention prescriptions, has officially launched its services in Georgia and Tennessee. Currently, 19 million women in America live in “contraceptive deserts,” meaning they don’t have access to a public health clinic or county that offers the full range of contraceptive methods.

“State by state, we are launching Nurx to create equity in healthcare access for all Americans through this

telehealth option,” said Hans Gangeskar, co-founder and CEO of Nurx, in a statement.

The platform provides an end-to-end digital health experience for customers. Patients have access to board-certified physicians to ask questions about different options, and can be prescribed a 3-month prescription supply at a time. It has over 50 different brands of birth control available, along with emergency contraception and the HIV-prevention drugs PrEP, which has been shown to be up to 99% effective at preventing transmission of the HIV virus when taken as directed.



Patients fill out a simple questionnaire and scan their ID, both of which are reviewed by a doctor. If the providers have any questions, they can speak with the customer through text-based messaging or video call.

Nurx is not for everyone, says company representatives, as many patients have more complicated medical histories that should be discussed with a doctor that knows their background. The service is best for patients who have an idea of prescriptions they need.

After acceptance, the supply is mailed right to the customer — for free if they have full-coverage insurance or as low as \$15.

“The CDC predicts that one in five Georgians will be diagnosed with HIV in their lifetime,” said Jessica Horn, Medical Director at Nurx, in a statement. “Health disparities like this are unacceptable. Especially when we know comprehensive education and PrEP access can significantly reduce new HIV infection rates.”

The Y-Combinator alum startup, founded in California, launched in 2015. It is now available in 20 states with recent additions of Georgia and Tennessee, making the service available to more than 70 percent of the U.S. population. This past July, Nurx closed a \$36 million funding round led by Kleiner Perkins earmarked for expansion, and added Chelsea Clinton to its board of directors.

So far, Nurx has contracted two physicians in Georgia, and plans to add more medical providers to the loc



Telehealth in Maryland

Telehealth provides a pathway to improve access to health care for Marylanders, including individuals:

- **In rural areas:** Individuals may not have the regular transportation or work schedules to allow them to travel long distances for quality health care, particularly specialists.
- **With challenging work or family schedules:** Individuals may not be able to seek care because of challenging work schedules or commitments to care for children or aging relatives.
- **Who are homebound or have limited mobility:** Individuals may have difficulty seeking care because of disabilities or health problems.
- **Who are embarrassed or anxious in seeking care:** Individuals may be intimidated or anxious in seeking in-person care. This may be particularly true for sensitive services including family planning, behavioral health, and particular men's health services.

Telehealth has already begun to make inroads in improving access to health care for Marylanders, but we can do more. HB 448/SB 402 will help Maryland move steadily forward in implementing telehealth. The legislation provides a clear and consistent framework for the provision of telehealth according to the same high standards of care for in-person services.

What This Bill Does:

HB 448/SB402 defines telehealth and authorizes Maryland licensed health care professionals to use telehealth to deliver health care services within their respective scopes of practice:

- **Implements a consistent regulatory framework and standards to promote telehealth adoption:** Currently a patchwork of conflicting regulations govern the use of telehealth in Maryland. The legislation provides clear definitions and standards on how practitioners can establish a patient relationship through telehealth and deliver care, including issuing prescriptions. Through technology-neutral language that accounts for future developments this bill also eliminates the current uncertainties about implementing new technologies that contain costs and improve quality.
- **Includes protections to ensure patient safety and appropriate use of telehealth services:** Telehealth is a delivery method and not a separate service in care. For that reason, the legislation makes clear that any practitioner using telehealth must be licensed in Maryland, must meet the same standard of care as for in-person healthcare services, and must comply with all federal laws regarding the prescribing of controlled substances.

HB 448/SB 402: Quality Health Care Services: When and Where Patients Need It

- **Permits health professionals to use a range of telehealth tools to meaningfully engage with their patients in the most appropriate setting:** Maryland needs to join the majority of other states -- from Texas to California-- that empower providers and patients to use both real-time and non-real time technologies (like secure messaging) to advance access to care through telehealth. Providers should be able to use their clinical judgment to determine the appropriate telehealth communication to uphold the standard of care and serve the best interest of their patients.
- **Builds a patient-centered model of care by allowing patients to choose when and where they obtain services:** Over 36% of people have delayed a doctor visit because they are too busy or the wait is too long, particularly for specialists. Telehealth can remove barriers of time, cost, and distance by allowing patients to initiate care at the time of their choosing, using technology to gather their pertinent health information in a structured fashion, and ensuring their issue is addressed as expeditiously as possible.
- **Helps Maryland meet the goals of Total Cost of Care Model:** Maryland is on the forefront of addressing population health goals and lowering the cost of care through our Total Cost of Care Model. We need to ensure that our hospitals and community-based providers have every tool they need, including telehealth, to deliver effective and efficient care.
- **Ensures consumers have access to the providers they need in their insurance networks:** In 2016, the Maryland General Assembly enacted legislation to ensure there were enough providers in insurance networks to meet consumers needs. However, there are still challenges, particularly in rural areas. Health insurers can build out their provider networks through telehealth. Consumers - whether located on the Eastern Shore, in Southern Maryland, or in Western Maryland - will not be as bound by geography in seeking health care services.

Telehealth is the Future of Care

As the average wait to see a primary care physician is nearly 30 days and providers spend only 40% of their time with patients, telehealth technologies improve access and make the delivery of quality healthcare more streamlined, cost-effective and transparent. Telehealth provides quality life-saving, routine, or preventive health care:

Primary Care: Many of the low-acuity conditions for which patients seek treatment -- like sinus infections and sore throats-- do not always require an in-person visit. Telehealth allows providers to remotely and efficiently treat patients where they are, while reserving in-person time for patients who need that kind of visit.

Maternal Health: Telehealth connects pregnant women to the care and resources they need to maintain a healthy pregnancy. Women with low-risk pregnancies can connect to their providers with greater frequency, while women with higher risk pregnancies can have better access to specialists and increased monitoring.

Emergency Care: Telehealth technologies help emergency departments remotely triage, evaluate, and treat non-emergency cases, which reduces wait times and allows ED providers to take care of more urgent cases.

Telestroke: Seconds matter when it comes to stroke care. Telehealth technologies connect stroke patients with experts for faster care, increasing survival rates and improving quality of life.

Reproductive and Sexual Health: Telehealth expands safe and convenient access to contraceptives, STI testing and treatment (including HIV prevention), and other stigmatized health conditions. Adherence to clinical guidelines among reproductive health providers using telehealth can be higher than in-person visits.



Fact Sheet

VA Telehealth Services

Operating the nation's largest health care system, the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) uses a wide variety of technologies to ensure excellence in care delivery. New technologies are revolutionizing health care and VA is recognized as a world leader in the development and use of telehealth. Telehealth services are mission-critical to the future direction of VA care to Veterans.

Telehealth increases access to high quality health care services by using information and telecommunication technologies to provide health care services when the patient and practitioner are separated by geographical distance. VA is committed to increasing access to care for Veterans, and has placed special emphasis on those in rural and remote locations.

Telehealth is Transformational. Telehealth is one of VA's major transformational initiatives aimed at ensuring care is convenient, accessible and patient-centered.

- In fiscal year (FY) 2016, about 12% of Veterans received elements of their care via telehealth.
- Telehealth in VA provides mission-critical services that help Veterans to live independently in their own homes and local communities.
- VA providers and patients discuss and decide together which telehealth care services are available in their location and clinically appropriate for the patient to opt into.

Telehealth is Robust and Sustainable. Telehealth is an effective and convenient way for patients to receive, and clinicians to provide, VA care. VA has implemented national quality, implementation, and development resources to ensure local services from more than 900 VA locations.

Telehealth is Visionary. Telehealth in VA is the forerunner of a wider vision in which the relationship between patients and the health care system is changed with the full realization of the "connected patient". The high levels of patient satisfaction and positive clinical outcomes attest to this.

VA Telehealth by the Numbers Fiscal Year 2016

- The number of Veterans receiving care via VA's telehealth services grew approximately 4% in FY16, and is anticipated to grow by approximately 4% in FY17.
- VA provided care to more than 702,000 patients via the three telehealth modalities. This amounted to over 2.17 million telehealth episodes of care.
- Forty-five percent 45% of these Veterans lived in rural areas, and may otherwise have had limited access to VA healthcare.

VA Telehealth Modalities

Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT) is defined as the use of real-time interactive video conferencing, sometimes with supportive peripheral technologies, to assess, treat and provide care to a patient remotely. Typically CVT links the patient(s) at a clinic to the provider(s) at another location. CVT can also provide video connectivity between a provider and a patient at home. CVT encompasses more than 50 clinical applications in VA such as specialty and primary care.

Home Telehealth (HT) is defined as a program into which Veterans are enrolled that applies care and case management principles to coordinate care using health informatics, disease management and technologies such as in-home and mobile monitoring, messaging and/or video technologies. The goal of Home Telehealth is to improve clinical outcomes and access to care while reducing complications, hospitalizations, and clinic or emergency room visits for Veterans in post-acute care settings, high-risk Veterans with chronic disease or Veterans at risk for placement in long-term care.

Store and Forward Telehealth (SFT) is generally defined as the use of technologies to asynchronously acquire and store clinical information (e.g. data, image, sound and video) that is then forwarded to or retrieved by a provider at another location for clinical evaluation. VA's national Store-and-Forward Telehealth programs operationalize this definition to cover services that provide this care using a clinical consult pathway and a defined information technology platform to communicate the event/encounter between providers, as well as enabling documentation of the event/encounter and the associated clinical evaluation within the patient record.

Signature VA Telehealth Programs

In developing VA Telehealth programs, VA has focused on Veteran patients as the main driver to prioritize areas of care. Signature VA Telehealth Programs that have been developed, or are currently under development include, but are not limited to:

- TeleAddiction Services
- TeleAmputation Care
- TeleAudiology
- TeleBipolar Disorder
- TeleCardiology
- TeleDental Care
- TeleDermatology
- TeleCardiology
- TeleChaplain
- TeleDentistry
- TeleDermatology
- TeleEpilepsy
- TeleGastroIntestinal/Hepatitis Care
- TeleGenomic Counseling
- TeleInfectious Disease
- TeleIntensive Care
- TeleKinesiology
- TeleMental Health
- TeleMOVE! Weight Management
- TeleNephrology
- TeleNeurology
- TeleNutrition
- TeleRetinal Imaging
- TeleOccupational Therapy
- TelePain Management
- TelePathology
- TelePodiatry
- TelePolytrauma Care
- TelePrimary Care
- TelePulmonology
- TeleRehabilitation
- TeleSchizophrenia
- TeleSpinal Cord Injury Care
- TeleSpirometry
- TeleSurgery (Pre - & Post- Care)
- TeleTransplant (Pre - & Post- Care)
- TeleWound Care
- Women's Telehealth

Veteran Enrollment in Telehealth

- Telehealth has been implemented in over 900 VA sites of care.
- Providers and patients agree on suitability for Telehealth.
- Veterans can elect to have traditional in-person care instead of Telehealth.
- Telehealth is available for over 50 specialty areas of care.

Telehealth by Modality

Veterans accessed VA care through one (or more) of the following telehealth types in FY16:

- More than 307,000 Veterans used Clinical Video Telehealth
- More than 150,000 Veterans used Home Telehealth
- More than 304,000 Veterans used Store-and-Forward Telehealth

Training for VA Physicians and other Clinicians

VA provides its national telehealth training for VA staff virtually. In FY16:

- VA provided 282 training sessions, with a total of 45,700 training completions. More than 10,000 staff attended at least one training session. VA conducts annual competency testing.

VA Telehealth Outcomes

Improved patient outcomes resulting in reduced utilization of inpatient care in FY16:

- Veterans enrolled in Home Telehealth for non-institutional care needs and chronic care management had a 59% decrease in VA bed days of care and a 31% decrease in VA hospital admissions.
- Mental Health services provided to Veterans via Clinical Video Telehealth (TeleMental Health) reduced Acute Psychiatric VA bed days of care by 39% and a 32% decrease in VA hospital admissions.

High Veteran satisfaction scores in FY16:

- 92% for Clinical Video Telehealth
- 88% for Home Telehealth
- 94% for Store and Forward Telehealth

Learn More Online about VA Telehealth Services:

- <http://www.telehealth.va.gov/>