



SB 521 – Behavioral Health – Opioid Treatment Services Programs – Medical Director
Senate Finance Committee

February 18, 2020

Position on the Bill: OPPOSE

Submitted By: Maryland Telehealth Alliance

The Maryland Telehealth Alliance opposes SB 521 – Behavioral Health – Opioid Treatment Services Programs – Medical Director because it prohibits a well-established use of telehealth technologies to deliver health care and/or health care oversight and disregards a medical director’s professional judgment and the scope and standard of care required in each individual telehealth encounter.

Furthermore, the bill appears to disregard the fact that there is a shortage of health care providers including medical directors throughout the state of Maryland. These shortages are especially prevalent in our rural areas and still exist even though telehealth use is gradually increasing across the state. An outright ban on the use of telehealth in any context is a backwards step.

Given the severity of the opioid epidemic in Maryland, singling out opioid treatment services programs for a restriction that will reduce access to treatment makes no sense. State policy should support all reasonable efforts to increase access to treatment.

It is unclear what problem this bill intends to solve. Does it arise out of an isolated incident or does it address a systemic problem? If the former, preventing all medical directors of opioid treatment services programs from providing services through telehealth is an excessive reaction. If the latter, there must be a less drastic solution than to reduce access to treatment for people who need it.

For all these reasons, the Maryland Telehealth Alliance opposes SB 521 and requests an unfavorable report.