



SB 502 Health Insurance - Telehealth - Delivery of Mental Health Services - Coverage for Home Settings  
Health Care Practitioners – Telehealth

Senate Finance Committee February 19, 2020

**SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** to include substance use treatment services as well as mental health services.

*MDDCSAM is the Maryland state chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine whose members are physicians and other health providers who treat people with substance use disorders.*

The requirement that a recipient of telehealth services must be present at a health care facility (the originating site) at the exact time that a provider at a distant site is ready – severely limits their value. Accessing services from home would immensely enhance their effectiveness.

For those without resources or support to easily navigate public transportation, who are home bound, or who find it difficult to travel for every health visit, this requirement effectively prevents access.

Missed appointments and lack of engagement are common and serious problems in all healthcare settings, undoubtedly exacerbated by the inconvenience of traveling to scheduled appointments.

These occur even more often in behavioral health treatment. Physical or psychological challenges can contribute. **Irregular follow-up is a common contributor to unsuccessful treatment.**

The critical shortage of behavioral health providers is the number one barrier limiting access to care. Accessible telehealth has the potential to ameliorate this barrier relatively quickly. With the current opioid epidemic and the rising suicide rate, these advances are urgently.

Health services with telehealth are held to the same standards of practice that apply to in-person health care settings, including the prescribing of controlled and dangerous substances. This would not be affected by the location of services.

Providers would be able to give more frequent feedback and encouragement to patients. Periodic checking in on progress with treatment plans would be possible. Problems with medication, or new symptoms, would be addressed sooner. Efficiency and effectiveness of health services would improve.

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