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POSITION STATEMENT

Senate Bill 502- Health Insurance – Delivery of Mental Health Services – Coverage for Home Settings
Finance Committee
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The Rural Maryland Council **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 502 – Health Insurance – Delivery of Mental Health Services – Coverage for Home Settings. This bill requires Medicaid, subject to the limitations of the state budget, to provide mental health services to a patient in their home via telehealth. Additionally, the bill expands the definition of “telehealth” in order to include the delivery of these mental health care services in the patient’s home.

According to Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, approximately 3.3% of adults in Maryland live with a serious mental health conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and major depressions. Only 56.8% of these adults receive any form of treatment from either public system or private providers. The remaining 43.2% receive no mental health treatment. Mental health refers to a person’s cognitive, behavioral, and emotional wellbeing-it’s about how one thinks, feels, and behaves. A mental disorder or illness are health care conditions involving changes in these traits.

Access to high quality behavioral healthcare is critical to a patient’s treatment and recovery. Telehealth can play a major role in providing this care as it greatly expands access and reaches more patients. This type of treatment uses interactive audio, video, or other telecommunications or electronic technology to enable a licensed health care provider to reach more patients and deliver a health care services at a location other than the traditional office setting, such as a patient’s home.

Additional benefits include:

- Provides accessible health care for people who live in rural or isolated communities.
- Make services more readily available or convenient for people with limited mobility, time or transportation options.
- Access to medical specialists.
- Improve communication and coordination of care among members of a health care team and a patient.
- Provide support for self-management of health care, .

SB 502 will increase the quality of mental health care in Maryland. The Council respectfully requests your favorable support of SB 502.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) brings together citizens, community-based organizations, federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to collectively address the needs of Rural Maryland communities. We provide a venue for members of agriculture and natural resource-based industries, health care facilities, educational institutions, economic and community development organizations, for-profit and nonprofit corporations, and government agencies to cross traditional boundaries, share information, and address in a more holistic way the special needs and opportunities in Rural Maryland.

“A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland”