



# Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network

## MSCAN

AARP Maryland

Alzheimer's  
Association,  
Maryland Chapters

Baltimore Jewish  
Council

Catholic Charities

Central Maryland  
Ecumenical Council

Church of the Brethren

Episcopal Diocese of  
Maryland

Housing Opportunities  
Commission of  
Montgomery County

Jewish Community  
Relations Council of  
Greater Washington

Lutheran Office on  
Public Policy in  
Maryland

Maryland Association of  
Area Agencies on Aging

Maryland Catholic  
Conference

Mental Health  
Association of Maryland

Mid-Atlantic LifeSpan

National Association of  
Social Workers,  
Maryland Chapter

Presbytery of Baltimore

The Coordinating  
Center

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## Testimony in Support of SB 502 with amendment Health Insurance-Telehealth-Delivery of Mental Health Services – Coverage for Home Settings Senate Finance Committee February 19, 2020

The Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network (MSCAN) is a statewide coalition of advocacy groups, service providers, faith-based and mission-driven organizations that supports policies that meet the housing and care needs of Maryland's low and moderate-income seniors. We appreciate the opportunity to offer support for SB 502 which will expand accessibility to mental health and substance use disorders for older adults who need to receive such services in their homes or other sites where telehealth can be delivered. MSCAN would, however, ask that an amendment be added to change the definition of "telehealth" to be inclusive of both mental health and substance use disorder services. With the amendment, the bill would read: **"TELEHEALTH" INCLUDES THE DELIVERY OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER SERVICES TO A PATIENT IN THE PATIENT'S HOME SETTING.**

Maryland's fastest growing demographic are individuals over the age of 80. In fact, with an estimated 10,000 American's turning 65 each day, the older adult population is on an unprecedented rise. While most adults grow old without a behavioral health disorder, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration claims that nearly 1 in 4 older adults experience a behavioral health disorder and less than 30% receive the treatment they need. In addition, older adults are the fastest growing group in need of treatment for alcohol use disorder.

Individuals who are confined to their homes or live in underserved and rural areas have higher rates of isolation and loneliness which are significant risk factors for late life mental illness and substance use disorders. Conditions causing pain and disability are also risk factors for the development of mental health and substance use disorders which, in turn, exacerbate co-morbid health conditions and chronic illnesses. Barriers to behavioral health treatment for the general older adult population include stigma, transportation, cost and location. Older adults overwhelmingly indicate a preference for in-home services. SB 502 allows for the definition of telehealth to include the delivery of mental health care services to a patient *in the patient's home*. As previously stated, MSCAN members would like substance use disorder services to also be delivered, when appropriate, in an individual's home.

MSCAN respectfully requests your favorable report on SB 502 with amendments.