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**HB 1208**

March 4, 2020

**TO:** Members of the House Health and Government Operations

**FROM:** Nicholas Blendy, Deputy Director of Government Relations

**RE:** House Bill 1208 – Telehealth – Pilot Program

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 1208.

Providing care to a growing population of older adults<sup>1</sup> with complex medical conditions living in the community presents a major challenge to our current healthcare system. An estimated 80% of older adults have at least one chronic disease and 77% have at least two chronic conditions.<sup>2</sup> More than 13,000 older adults live below the federal poverty line in Baltimore City.<sup>3</sup> Transportation costs required by in-person medical appointments can burden our older adults living with chronic conditions and their family caregivers. To provide our aging population with the care they need so they can continue to live in their communities with dignity, we may require innovative solutions like telehealth.

Telehealth allows providers to offer a wide range of diagnostic and therapeutic services to patients who might otherwise face barriers to care such as lack of

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<sup>1</sup> Older adults is defined here as age 65 years or older.

<sup>2</sup> “Healthy Aging Facts.” N.d. National Council on Aging. Accessed 1 March 2020. Available from: ncao.org

<sup>3</sup> “Maryland Poverty Profiles”. 2018. Maryland Alliance for the Poor. Accessed 1 March 2020. Available from mda.maryland.gov

transportation or provider shortages in their area.<sup>4</sup> Systematic reviews showed that mental health and chronic disease management services delivered via telehealth were equivalent to in-person services.<sup>5</sup> Telehealth can also provide cost-savings and improved health outcomes; the Veteran Health Administration reported significant decreases in hospital admissions since implementation of its telehealth program and approximately \$1 billion in system wide savings from telehealth patient participation in 2012.<sup>6</sup>

HB 1208 requires the Maryland Department of Health to apply to the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services for certain amendment waivers to implement a telehealth pilot program under the Maryland Medical Assistance Program. Enabling the use of telehealth for chronic disease management and behavioral health services ensures that patients receive care regardless of their geographic location or ability to leave their house. This bill provides an opportunity to further evaluate if telehealth can be a much needed and effective tool to increase access to care, lower costs, and improve health outcomes for Marylanders.

We respectfully request a **favorable** report on House Bill 1208.

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<sup>4</sup> Quinn WV et al. “Using Telehealth to Improve Home-Based Care for Older Adults and Family Caregivers.” May 2018. AARP Public Policy Institute. Accessed 1 March 2020. Available from: [aarp.org](http://aarp.org)

<sup>5</sup> Shigekawa E et al. “The Current State of Telehealth Evidence: A Rapid Review.” Health Affairs. December 2018. Vol 37, no.12. Available from: [www.healthaffairs.org](http://www.healthaffairs.org)

<sup>6</sup> “Telehealth: Helping Hospitals Deliver Cost-Effective Care.” 2016. American Hospital Association. Accessed 1 March 2020. Available from: [aha.org](http://aha.org)