



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Health and Government Operations Committee

March 4, 2020

House Bill 1208: Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Telehealth – Pilot Program

POSITION: SUPPORT

Delegate Shetty, Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of House Bill 1208: Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Telehealth – Pilot Program.

This legislation would require the Maryland Department of Health to apply, on or before December 1, 2020, to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for an amendment to certain waivers to implement a pilot program to provide certain telehealth services to recipients under the Maryland Medical Assistance Program; limiting the telehealth services available under the pilot program; requiring the Department to administer the pilot program under certain circumstances; terminating the Act after June 30, 2025; etc.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland. Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

Maryland law states that “many rural communities in the State face a host of difficult challenges relating to persistent unemployment, poverty, changing technological and economic conditions, an aging population and an out-migration of youth, inadequate access to quality housing, health care and other services, and deteriorating or inadequate transportation, communications, sanitations, and economic development infrastructure.” (West's Annotated Code of Maryland, State Finance and Procurement § 2-207.8b)

The 2018 Maryland Rural Health Plan (www.MDRuralHealthPlan.org), an extensive assessment of Maryland's rural health needs, identifies access of care and providers as a priority in rural Maryland. As part of the formulation of the MD Rural Health Plan, focus groups of health care providers discussed telehealth services as an innovation that could improve access to care for Maryland's rural communities. MRHA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we thank you for your consideration

Lara Wilson, Executive Director, larawilson@mdruralhealth.org, 410-693-6988