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February 10, 2021

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Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
11 Bladen Street
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB 500 Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact

Position: **Support**

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

The Maryland Psychological Association represents over 1000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state. **We write in support of SB 500, which would enable psychologists in participating states to practice telehealth and 30 days of temporary of in-person psychological treatment across jurisdictional lines. It is designed to increase access to mental health care and assure continuity of care. Research has demonstrated the efficacy of telehealth for many mental health issues. Benefits of this bill include increased access to care for all Marylanders, ease of access to care for rural and underserved communities, disabled individuals, elderly, and members of our society who have been dislocated or are mobile, as well as supporting small businesses in Maryland. This bill expands the reach of specialty care that might not be conveniently located in many areas of Maryland, such as substance abuse and addictions, trauma care, and support for those struggling with deficits/weakness in brain function.**

We have consistently heard from our members about the challenges of treating Maryland residents who live in an area where it is not unusual for family members to live, work, or go to school in different jurisdictions, making continuity of care difficult to impossible: given our current licensing laws. The current situation leaves Marylanders at increased risk of relapse into substance abuse/self-destructive behaviors, harm to others physically and emotionally as well as increased suicides. Most of these challenges occur when a Maryland resident has worked hard to build a trusting relationship with their psychologist and the following happens:

- Students go out of state to school while engaged in treatment.
- People who go on vacation or a business trip and experience a crisis event.
- Families who divorce and live in different jurisdictions.
- Individuals who experience a crisis which requires immediate intervention while at a work or home location that is not in the same jurisdiction as their treatment.
- Elderly or disabled individuals who may be in medical crisis and could use mental health support from their doctor but are hospitalized in a jurisdiction other than the one in which they are receiving treatment.

For these and many other reasons noted above the Maryland Psychological Association asks for a **FAVORABLE** report on Senate Bill 500. Our members will be providing you with specific examples of situations in where this bill will make a critical difference in the lives of Marylanders seeking mental health treatment.

Please note that we have attached additional information for your review, as you consider your response to this vital bill.

Thank you for considering our comments on SB 500. If we can be of any further assistance as the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee considers this bill, please do not hesitate to contact the MPA Executive Director, Stefanie Reeves, MA, CAE at 410-992-4258 or exec@marylandpsychology.org.

Esther Finglass
Esther Finglass, Ph.D.
President

R. Patrick Savage, Jr.
R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs

Attachments:

Appendix 1 - Letters of Support
Appendix 2 - Supporting Documents