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ChildrensNational.org

February 12, 2021

Maryland General Assembly  
Senate Education Health and Environmental Affairs Committee  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21501

**Re: Support for SB500 & HB970, Maryland Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact**

Dear Senator Lam, Senator Hettleman, and other distinguished committee members:

I am a child psychologist and serve as the Chief of the Division of Psychology & Behavioral Health at Children's National Hospital. I also serve as the Gerard B. Lambert Foundation Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at the George Washington University School of Medicine. As Division Chief, I am responsible for overseeing a large division of psychologists who provide mental and behavioral health support for children, adolescents, and young adults with acute and chronic psychiatric and medical conditions. As you can imagine, the needs for psychological support have grown tremendously over the last year and we are working hard to try and meet the needs of the communities we serve, which includes the larger DMV area.

I live in Bethesda, MD and I work in several of our Children's National locations (including in Rockville, MD). Children's National prioritizes accessible quality care for youth in the DMV by supporting behavioral health services across the area. We are fortunate to have highly skilled and specialized psychologists offering primary care behavioral health services, pediatric psychology (specialization working with medically ill children), as well as neuropsychological services. We frequently use telehealth sessions to reduce service access barriers for the families we serve. Over the past 11 months during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have relied almost exclusively on telemedicine to provide care to children and families which has served to keep families as well as providers safe, and has also resulted in reducing barriers to care for families across Maryland.

By way of this letter I aim to provide strong testimony in support of the Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact (PSYPACT) bill, (SB500 and HB970). **This bill will increase access to high quality mental health care and increase continuity of mental health services, removing jurisdictional barriers.**

The mental health crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates longstanding gaps in access to mental health services and continuity of mental health service; these gaps result in steep increases in untreated depression and anxiety in the youth across the country including in Maryland. **Best mental health care services include treatment from highly qualified clinicians, continuity of care over time AND access to care at critical times.** Importantly for our youth, this bill enables increased access to specialized mental health care AND continuity of care across many states where patients who live and go to school/work in different jurisdictions, or for those living with multiple guardians across jurisdictions. Further, this would allow continuity of care for those who transition to a new location for college or even while on a school break or vacation.

Children's National supports this bill because the children and families of Maryland need and deserve increased access to the highest quality mental health care. PSYPACT leads to **improved Continuity of Care**:



### **1)Specialty Services**

Many children experience medical trauma and difficulty adjusting to their illnesses. Following psychological support while an inpatient at Children's National, children return home to Maryland.

Many youth require additional support to help with readjusting back to home and school. There is a shortage of pediatric psychologists who provide this care.

### **2)Interjurisdictional Telehealth to increase Access to Care**

For many of our patients, we have observed unexpected improvements in continuity of care with executive orders for cross-state mental health services at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the expansion of telehealth services and ability to follow our patients as they transition between caregivers' residences, their treatment and outcomes have improved.

### **3)College Students**

PSYPACT enables continued support for youth leaving for college. At one of the most challenging transition points for adolescents and young adults, many Maryland youth are forced to abandon their mental health treatment as they move out of state. Particularly for our youth with Medicaid, we are unable to find them out of state mental health clinicians when they leave for college. This transition is difficult for many youth, but much more difficult for those with mental health and chronic medical conditions.

The continuity of care, access to care, and high-quality specialized care are critical to support mental health of Maryland youth. Due to the pandemic, we now have evidence that telemedicine services is both feasible and effective for mental health.

### **The children of Maryland need and deserve the mental health support they need to thrive.**

Please, help us pass the Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact so that we improve access to and continuity of mental health care for Maryland youth. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB500/HB970 and look forward to ways to work collaboratively to help our youth reach their goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randi Streisand, Ph.D." in a cursive script.

Randi Streisand, PhD, CDCES  
Division Chief, Psychology and Behavioral Health  
Vice Chair, Institutional Review Board  
Children's National Hospital  
Gerard B. Lambert Foundation Professor  
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