

February 17, 2021

The Honorable Delores Kelley
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
241 House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Senate Bill 567 - Telehealth Services – Expansion

Dear Chair Kelley,

The University of Maryland School of Medicine strongly supports SB 567 – Telehealth Services Expansion. The COVID-19 public health emergency accelerated the maturity of our Telehealth programs across our Faculty Practice plan. What would have otherwise crippled our healthcare system, the ability to deliver virtual care during the pandemic became critically important for our beneficiaries. Access to telehealth services without geographic restrictions, and via audio only transmission, helped ensure that patients could receive care where they are based on consumer choice and safety, and adjudicated by clinical judgment. We fully recognize and appreciate the high level of patient satisfaction delivered through Telehealth Services and plan to continue this high quality virtual care beyond the pandemic, with your help.

In response to the public health emergency, telehealth services allowed physicians and other providers to deliver care to our patients while supporting social distancing efforts, reducing exposure and spread of SARS-CoV-2 and other diseases, and reducing the utilization of personal protective equipment (a high value commodity during the public health emergency).

Telehealth Services allowed us to optimize technology to support secure, HIPAA compliant virtual care, especially for some our underserved populations. Telehealth technology allowed for the continuity of care helping to enhance patient wellness and improve efficiency and quality of care—with increased patient satisfaction. We also experienced access to real-time information related to social determinants of health which impact the lives of many patients in the communities that we serve. The efforts at greater provider to patient communication, and trust helped lead to improved health outcomes, reduced cost and waste, and duplication of services.

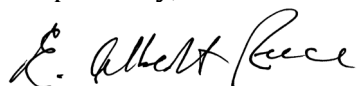


The authority granted under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) that broadened the waiver authority under section 1135 of the Social Security Act alleviated restrictive provider criteria allowing for other providers to bill for telehealth services. Reimbursement parity for telehealth providers will help this service continue to thrive and build robust telehealth care programs. All of our clinical departments are extremely supportive of this effort, including department Chairs:

Brian Browne, MD	Emergency Medicine
Peter Crino, MD, PhD	Neurology
Kevin Cullen, MD	Oncology
Steven Czinn, MD	Pediatrics
Stephen Davis, MBBS	Medicine
Tom Hornyak, MD, PhD	Dermatology
Bennie Jeng, MD, MS	Ophthalmology
Christine Lau, MD, MBA	Surgery
Jill RachBeisel, MD	Psychiatry
William Regine, MD	Radiation Oncology
Peter Rock, MD, MBA	Anesthesiology
Thomas Scalea, MD	Trauma
Sanford Stass, MD	Pathology
Rodney Taylor, MD, MPH	Otorhinolaryngology -Head and Neck Surgery
Graeme Woodworth, MD	Neurosurgery

We look to your leadership in enacting this legislation and look forward to partnering with you on this critical and innovative healthcare initiative. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 567 - Telehealth Services – Expansion.

Respectfully,



E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA

*Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs, UM Baltimore
John Z. and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor and
Dean, University of Maryland School of Medicine*