



January 25, 2021

Testimony of Laura Hale
American Heart Association
Support of HB 123 Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2021

Dear Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Honorable Members of the Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Laura Hale and I am the Director of Government Relations for the American Heart Association. The American Heart Association offers our strong support of HB 123.

Telehealth can make health care more effective, accessible, and efficient, particularly for those who otherwise lack access to quality healthcare. Telehealth allows quality health care to be delivered to patients in communities where in-person subspecialty services are not available, providing support and training for complex medical conditions to local providers, increasing accessibility for families to specialists, and minimizing time away from work and home. Longer travel distances for services can result in a reduced number of physician visits, increased rates of attrition, and inadequate management of chronic conditions¹. Telehealth has been shown to be more convenient than traveling to meet a specialist and has resulted in equal or higher patient satisfaction and comparable patient outcomes compared with in-person appointments, making it a viable and beneficial option of care²³⁴.

During the pandemic and beyond telehealth coverage is essential to continue to break down barriers to access for individuals living in rural areas well as urban areas of high need. By including both audio and video coverage of telehealth more Marylanders will be able to have access to and attend medical appointments. This will lead to better health outcomes.

It is essential for this coverage for all medical needs including cardiac rehabilitation and stroke rehabilitation. After a cardiac or stroke event, attempting to travel to an appoint can be extremely difficult, by maintaining telehealth coverage for all individuals (including those on Medicaid) we will see better health outcomes and attendance.

Keeping Marylander healthy and with better access to care is key. Through the continuation of coverage of telehealth Marylanders will live longer and healthier lives. The American Heart Association urges a swift and favorable report on HB 123.

¹ Smith AC, Youngberry K, Christie F, Isles A, McCrossin R, Williams M, Van der Westhuyzen J and Wootton R. The family costs of attending hospital outpatient appointments via videoconference and in person. *J Telemed Telecare*. 2003;9 Suppl 2:S58-61.

² Strauss K, MacLean C, Troy A and Littenberg B. Driving distance as a barrier to glycemic control in diabetes. *J Gen Intern Med*. 2006;21:378-80.

³ Davis LE, Coleman J, Harnar J and King MK. Teleneurology: successful delivery of chronic neurologic care to 354 patients living remotely in a rural state. *Telemed J E Health*. 2014;20:473-7.

⁴ Agha Z, Schapira RM, Laud PW, McNutt G and Roter DL. Patient satisfaction with physician-patient communication during telemedicine. *Telemed J E Health*. 2009;15:830-9.