



Maryland Independent College
and University Association

Written Support

House Appropriations Committee

House Bill 123 (Pena-Melnyk) Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2021

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January 27, 2021

On behalf of Maryland's independent colleges and universities and the 65,600 students we serve, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of *House Bill 123 – Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2021*. The COVID-19 public health emergency has impacted our students right along with the rest of the world. Following Governor Hogan's declaration of a State of Emergency, every MICUA institution took steps to transition to remote instruction. Protocols to prevent contagion, including strategies for quarantine and to continue business operations if the pandemic were to persist, were planned and implemented. By March 20, 2020, all of the MICUA institutions determined that remote instruction would continue for the rest of the spring semester.

As we are all aware, the pandemic has taken a steep toll on students' mental health. Many students are showing signs of increased anxiety and depression as they struggle to navigate a college experience starkly different from what they had envisioned, in addition to dealing with new and complicated socio-economic triggers and sources of stress.

Through our wellness and health centers, MICUA member institutions offer a wide array of services to support and promote student mental health, emotional growth, and well-being. Although in-person classes stopped, our institutions continued to provide remote learning and student support services via telehealth. Some of these support services include virtual wellness programs to deal with issues related to depression, anxiety, relationship problems, substance abuse, academic challenges, social pressures, loss, and many others. Telehealth has been a good resource for college and university students to access health care providers while they are home.

Higher education students are adjusting to a new learning structure without a roadmap. The Coronavirus pandemic has upended traditional health care delivery, and by instituting telemedicine, students stay connected to appropriate services when in need.

For all of these reasons, MICUA requests a favorable Committee report for House Bill 123.