



Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Mid-Atlantic States, Inc
2101 East Jefferson Street
Rockville, Maryland 20852

February 10, 2021

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building Room 240
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: HB 551 – Support with Amendments

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Members of the Committee:

Kaiser Permanente supports many of the policy goals of HB 551, “Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance – Coverage and Reimbursement of Telehealth Services.” Kaiser Permanente has been working with stakeholders on amendments to HB 123/SB 3, the Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2021, which is similar in many ways to this legislation. We recommend that any additional legislative changes proposed by HB 551 be considered through that stakeholder process.

Kaiser Permanente is the largest private integrated health care delivery system in the United States, delivering health care to over 12 million members in eight states and the District of Columbia.¹ Kaiser Permanente of the Mid-Atlantic States, which operates in Maryland, provides and coordinates complete health care services for approximately 775,000 members. In Maryland, we deliver care to over 450,000 members.

Kaiser Permanente has been offering telehealth services since 2013 and quickly expanded our existing and already robust virtual care services to provide thousands of video, audio, and secure email visits daily during the coronavirus pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, approximately 85 percent of our appointments were completed in person and about 15 percent were virtual. In the early months of the pandemic, the balance shifted to nearly 90 percent virtual services, and today we are providing approximately 50 percent of care through telehealth, about half through video visits and half through audio-only telephone visits. Chart 1 below shows the how the proportion of telehealth and in-person visits has shifted over time.

Incidentally, as the visit types shifted during the pandemic, member satisfaction saw its largest single quarter increase and highest overall level ever. We closely track member satisfaction, a metric that includes care experience and primary and specialty care access. Chart 2 below illustrates this increase.

¹ Kaiser Permanente comprises Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Inc., the nation’s largest not-for-profit health plan, and its health plan subsidiaries outside California and Hawaii; the not-for-profit Kaiser Foundation Hospitals, which operates 39 hospitals and over 650 other clinical facilities; and the Permanente Medical Groups, self-governed physician group practices that exclusively contract with Kaiser Foundation Health Plan and its health plan subsidiaries to meet the health needs of Kaiser Permanente’s members.

Kaiser Permanente supports HB 551 overall because it removes restrictions on access to telehealth services for both Medicaid enrollees and commercial members. In particular, we support the changes that remove the originating site requirement and expand the types of providers eligible to provide telehealth services in the Medicaid program. Also, while we support explicit coverage of audio-only telehealth, we do not believe the legislature should mandate specific payment levels for these services.

As noted above, Kaiser Permanente has been working with stakeholders on amendments to HB 123/SB 3, the Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2021, which shares many of the policy goals of HB 551. We recommend that any additional legislative changes proposed by HB 551 be considered through that stakeholder process.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please feel free to contact Allison Taylor at Allison.W.Taylor@kp.org or (202) 924-7496 with questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Allison Taylor".

Allison Taylor
Director of Government Relations
Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of Mid-Atlantic States, Inc.

Chart 1: Volume of In-person, Video, and Audio-only Visits, Dec 2019-Oct 2020

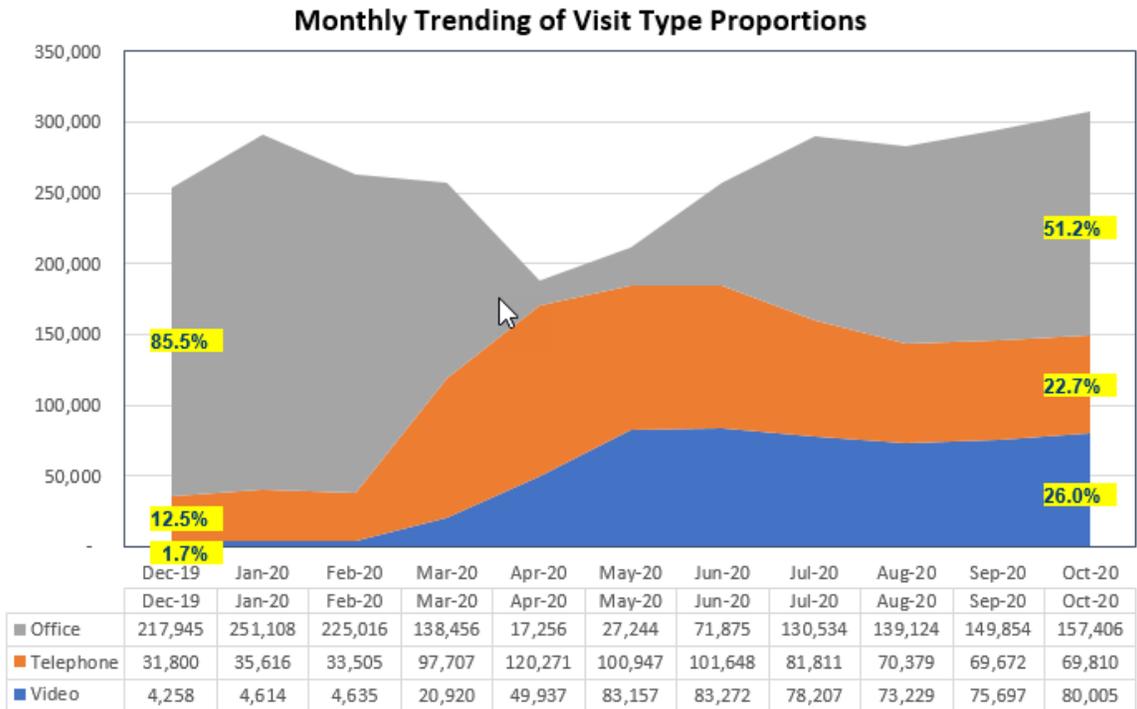


Chart 2: Member Satisfaction, 2017-Q3 2020

