

February 10, 2021

The Honorable Del. Shane Pendergrass, Chairperson
Health and Government Operations
Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen St. RM. 241
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: **SUPPORT FOR HB 732** – Health Care Practitioners - Telehealth - Out-of-State Health Care Practitioners

Dear Chairperson Pendergrass and Distinguished Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

Thank you for taking my written statement of support for HB 732 on telehealth and out-of-state health care practitioners to be entered into the public hearing record. My name is Kathleen Woodworth, and I am a mental health therapist who resides in Prince George's County, and I practice in both Charles County and Prince George's County, Maryland.

Telebehavioral health modalities are important to me because they allow me to provide needed services to those who otherwise would not be able to receive them, such as those who are without transportation, as well as those who are dealing with social anxieties or phobias that limit their ability to see me in person. From the start of the pandemic, telehealth allowed me to continue working and serving those individuals remotely, which was crucial in terms of containing the spread of coronavirus.

We are still in the throes of a global pandemic, and the need for health care and mental health services has never been greater. COVID-19 has revealed systemic flaws in our mental health services for providers and clients alike. It is imperative that we remove barriers to life-saving services in a responsible yet urgent manner.

This bill will authorize an out-of-state health care practitioner to provide telebehavioral health services to a patient located in the state in accordance with the State Practice Act. This legislation also requires the health occupations board to register an out-of-state health care practitioner, allowing for necessary oversight and monitoring of out-of-state practice.

While we are working to upload and implement the Counseling Compact in this state and throughout the U.S., this immediate action, removing barriers to critical support, is essential for the wellbeing of Maryland residents, families, and a social services system overburdened by staggering need.

I strongly urge you to support telebehavioral health services and HB 732.

Sincerely,

Kathleen M. Woodworth, LGPC, NCC
Mental Health Therapist

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