



Olivia Bartlett, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team

Committee: Health and Government Operations

Testimony on: HB0123 - Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2021

POSITION: Favorable

Hearing Date: January 27, 2021

BILL CONTACT: Delegate Josephine Pena-Melnyk

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 2500 members who live in a wide range of communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, from Bethesda near the DC line north to Frederick and from Poolesville east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep its members healthy and safe in a clean environment, that support and uplift all members of its communities, and that promote equity across all of our diverse communities. DTMG strongly supports HB0123 because access to affordable health care for all Marylanders is a primary focus for our organization.

HB0123 will make permanent several telehealth provisions of the Medical Assistance Program. The Program was enacted as temporary emergency legislation to help Marylanders during the current coronavirus crisis. The Program allows the use of reimbursable telehealth visits for medical needs when consumers are unable to access health care at a traditional medical facility because of coronavirus closures. Telehealth services continue to fill a vital role in Maryland's health care needs, allowing medical and behavioral health treatment in a safe and secure manner.

Enacting HB0123 and making telehealth services permanent will have the added benefit of allowing constituents who previously were not able to receive in-person treatment because of disabilities, lack of transportation, lack of childcare, or the inability to take time off work to obtain needed medical advice via the telephone. Many members of racial and ethnic minorities have inadequate access to medical and behavioral health services, and this has been exacerbated during the pandemic in which their groups have been disproportionately adversely affected. Providing access to telehealth services will provide essential support to these communities.

Telehealth is also a lifeline for those with mental health issues and those who need substance use disorder treatments during the COVID-19 pandemic and afterwards. Reimbursement of telehealth visits at the same rate as in-person visits particularly helps to address the shortage of behavioral health and primary care providers and will facilitate treatment for the most vulnerable in our communities.

Therefore, DoTheMostGood strongly recommends a **FAVORABLE** report on HB0123.

Respectfully submitted,
Olivia Bartlett
Co-lead, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team
oliviabartlett@verizon.net
240-751-5599