



MARYLAND CITIZENS' HEALTH INITIATIVE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 123

Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2021

Before the Health and Government Operations Committee

By Stephanie Klapper, Deputy Director, Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative, Inc.

January 27, 2021

Chairman Pendergrass and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 123, which would retain emergency telehealth provisions implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, including allowing audio-only telehealth appointments. I want to especially thank Delegate Peña-Melnyk for introducing this bill. Many Marylanders, especially vulnerable and underserved populations, rely on telehealth to continue to receive care. Audio-only telehealth is especially important as 520,000 Maryland households do not have reliable broadband Internet at home, and close to 290,000 households do not have a desktop, laptop, or tablet.¹ The bill will also help ensure that adequate data is collected to maintain high quality care through telehealth. Therefore, HB 123 would be an important step forward in improving equitable health care delivery in Maryland. Thank you again to the committee for your recognized efforts toward improving access to quality, affordable health care for all Marylanders. We urge a favorable report from the Committee on House Bill 123.

¹ Horrigan, J.B. (2021). *Disconnected in Maryland: Statewide Data Show the Racial and Economic Underpinnings of the Digital Divide*. The Abell Foundation.

https://abell.org/sites/default/files/files/2020_Abell_digital%20inclusion_full%20report_FINAL-web.pdf