

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:

I want to thank you for taking my written statement of support for HB 732 on telehealth & out-of-state health care practitioners to be entered into the public hearing record. My name is Karen Jones and I am the Clinical Director for Lantern Therapeutic Services and an LCPC who resides and practices in Charles County Maryland.

Telebehavioral health modalities are important to me because telebehavioral health, increased access to services, and removed barriers related to transportation and the ability to pay for transportation. In addition, it allows client to feel more comfortable in their own environment while receiving services. For our agency in Southern Maryland as well as others, where we have a perpetual shortage of providers, Telebehavioral Health allows us to bring in providers who would not travel to our area otherwise.

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 and 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 supports, 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,

Karen Jones, LCPC
Clinical Director

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