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**HB 123 Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2021**  
**Support**  
**House Health and Government Operations Committee**  
**January 27, 2021**

Good Afternoon Chairwoman Pendergrass and members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee. My name is Tammy Bresnahan and I am the Director of Advocacy for AARP MD. As you may know, AARP Maryland is one of the largest membership-based organizations in Maryland, encompassing over 850,000 members. I am here today representing AARP MD and its members in support of **HB 123 Preserve Telehealth Access Health**.

AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, nationwide organization that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse.

House Bill 123 requires Medicaid to provide health care services appropriately delivered through “telehealth” to program recipients regardless of their location at the time telehealth services are provided and allow a “distant site provider” to provide health care services to a recipient from any location at which the services may be appropriately delivered through telehealth. The bill expands the definitions of “telehealth” for both Medicaid and private insurance. Insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations (collectively known as carriers) must reimburse for a covered service appropriately provided through telehealth on the same basis and at the same rate as if delivered in person. A carrier may not impose as a condition of reimbursement for a telehealth service that the service be provided by a provider designated by the carrier. The bill’s insurance provisions apply to all policies, contracts, and health benefit plans issued, delivered, or renewed in the State on or after January 1, 2022.

Telehealth holds great potential for helping older Marylanders looking to maintain their independence and enjoy living at home longer. It offers a range of options to make healthcare easier and more accessible. From tracking vital signs with remote monitoring devices, to communicating easily with a nurse through a web portal, to receiving on-the-spot care from a doctor via video chat, telehealth aims to make life easier.

Telehealth also shows great potential for making healthcare more affordable, convenient, and self-directed, which may explain its rapid growth. For many caregivers, finding time to help manage their older family member’s health issues can be difficult. Accompanying family/partners/friends to frequent doctor’s appointments, coordinating care, and managing health records can prove challenging. Thankfully, telehealth makes the process easier for both older Marylanders and their caregivers, helping both keep their independence.

**AARP**  
Real Possibilities

AARP MD encourages state governments to pass laws that encourage coverage and payment of telehealth services (including by removing unnecessary restrictions that limit beneficiary access) for eligible beneficiaries to improve access and the quality of care, allow patients to remain safely in the community, and assist with care transitions from institutional to community settings.

AARP supports HB 123 Preserve Telehealth Access Act and respectfully requests the House Health and Government Operations Committee issue a favorable report. For questions please contact Tammy Bresnahan at [tbresnahan@aarp.org](mailto:tbresnahan@aarp.org) or by calling 410-302-8451.