



DATE: February 25, 2021 **COMMITTEE:** House Health and Government Operations
BILL NO: House Bill 970
BILL TITLE: Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact
POSITION: Support

Kennedy Krieger Institute supports House Bill 970 – Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact

Bill Summary:

House Bill 970 enters Maryland into the Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact.

Background:

Kennedy Krieger Institute is dedicated to improving the lives of children and young adults with developmental, behavioral, cognitive and physical challenges. Kennedy Krieger's services include inpatient, outpatient, school-based and community-based programs.

Psychology Telehealth Services: Kennedy Krieger provides approximately 134,000 behavioral health appointments to 15,000 families per year, of whom over 1000 live outside of the state of Maryland.

While over ninety percent of the patients seen in these disciplines reside across Maryland, the use of telehealth during the pandemic has been beneficial for our Maryland families residing in Southern Maryland, Western Maryland, and the Eastern Shore and those out of state. Using Telehealth in state as an alternative service delivery model has reduced costs for families related to lost time from work, gas/mileage costs, and other travel-associated expenses, and has allowed patients to receive service in their natural setting. Results of our initial Institute-wide patient experience survey to all families who received telehealth services from March 15, 2020 through end of May 2020 indicate that the majority of patients & families are satisfied or extremely satisfied with the telehealth services, and many indicate a desire to continue receiving telehealth even once in-person services are available again in their specific programs.

Out of State Services:

Kennedy Krieger Institute provides specialized services to patients nationally and internationally. In pre-pandemic times, families would need to make arrangements to complete the potentially costly and time consuming trip to Kennedy Krieger Institute to obtain the skilled services their child and/or family required. In our current and uncertain time with COVID-19, the Telehealth service delivery model enables our providers to see patients from 44 of the 50 states in 2020 but barriers with licensure and regulations can cause significant delays and sometimes an inability to provide the specialized care. With the complete services offered both at Kennedy Krieger Institute locations, in our community, and in the homes of our patients and their families combined with our geographic proximity to numerous surrounding states, there has been and will continue to be extreme struggles in providing care in the absence of an interstate compact.

Rationale:

Maryland's participation in the PSYPACT would serve to:

- increase client/patient access to care,
- facilitate continuity of care when client/patient relocates,
- certify that psychologists licensed in other PSYPACT states and treating Maryland patients have met acceptable standards of practice across education, training and experience,
- promote cooperation between PSYPACT states in areas of licensure and regulation,
- offer a higher degree of consumer protection across state lines, and
- permit psychologists to provide services to populations currently underserved or geographically isolated.

Enacting PSYPACT will allow a formal and legal relationship amongst states that promote a common agenda, to improve the health, wellbeing, and lives of the patients and families that we serve so they can live their lives to the fullest. This will allow families across participating states to have access to the highest quality of psychologists available while also decreasing the burdens placed on the patient, family, and the system. Though the need for an interstate compact has existed for many years, the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed this need to the forefront. As states begin to modify their telehealth waivers and remove their expedited licensure policies put into place due to the pandemic, access to care and continuity of care will be reduced and as a result, the full potential of those who need and have been receiving specialized services will be halted. To date, there are 14 PSYPACT states (15 as of 3/1/2021), including our sister states of Delaware, Pennsylvania and Virginia. There are 15 additional states with pending legislation. It is time for Maryland to join the Compact to ensure access to mental health for all Maryland residents, and to ensure that Maryland psychologists can provide telebehavioral health services to all of their patients, regardless of their physical location.

Kennedy Krieger Institute requests a favorable report on House Bill 970.