



Committee: House Health and Government Operations Committee
Bill Number: House Bill 551
Title: Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance Coverage and Reimbursement of Telehealth Services
Hearing Date: February 10, 2021
Position: Support

The Maryland Nurses Association (MNA) supports *House Bill 551 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance Coverage and Reimbursement of Telehealth Services*. The bill provides for fair and consistent reimbursement rules to continue the support of telehealth after the pandemic. We would like to highlight the bill’s support of audio-only visits, which are critical to serve communities without access to broadband or have limited technology resources. In addition, this bill offers critical protections to ensure reimbursement polices comply with the federal parity rules for behavioral health services.

Under our Total Cost of Care Model in Maryland, it is critical that health care providers continue to be able to utilize telehealth to communicate efficiently and effectively with patients. According to the American Hospital Association Center for Health Innovation¹:

“Telehealth and digital health care enable a model of care that is ubiquitous and seamless, more affordable and integrated into patients’ lives. In the shift to demand-driven health care, telehealth becomes the patient’s first — and most frequent — point of access for urgent care, triage for emergent conditions, specialty consults, post-discharge management, medication education, behavioral health counseling, chronic care management and more.”

Telehealth can be used to:

- Increase access to primary care services, urgent care, and specialist services in shortage areas;
- Support facilities and programs in managing the use of their ambulatory care space. If some patients can be treated through telehealth, it is a more efficient use of resources; and
- Increase patient satisfaction. Patients can probably be seen more quickly and without having to take time off from work.

We ask for a favorable report on this legislation. If we can provide additional perspective on telehealth, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.

¹ The American Hospital Association Center for Health Innovation. “Telehealth: A Path to Virtual Integrated Care”. February 2019. https://www.aha.org/system/files/media/file/2019/02/MarketInsights_TeleHealthReport.pdf