

*MDDCSAM is a chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine whose members are physicians and other health providers who treat people with substance use disorders.*

House Bill 191

Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Psychiatrist and Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner Telemedicine Reimbursement - Sunset Termination

Maryland Health and Government Operations Committee. Hearing: January 27, 2021

## **FAVORABLE**

We support the continued ability of psychiatrists and psychiatric nurse practitioners to have the option of using telehealth in ACT and mobile services on a permanent basis.

This is especially true now due to the need to reduce the spread of Covid-19, and also due to sharp increases in suicide, as well as depression and anxiety associated with the pandemic. (Vindegaard & Benros, 2020) There has also been a rise in the use of alcohol, illicit substances, and of overdoses deaths. (Dubey, et. al., 2020).

**There is a permanent need since the option of using telehealth makes treatment much more accessible and more efficient to deliver, especially to the difficult-to-reach populations in need of ACT and mobile services.**

The problem of access is compounded by a **long-term severe shortage of psychiatrists and psychiatric nurse practitioners available to travel for in-person visits.** This severe manpower shortage is a limiting factor in the provision of needed services, which could be easily and inexpensively remedied by the option of using telehealth.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

### References

Dubey, M. J., (2020). Covid 19 and addiction. *Diabetes and Metabolic Syndrome*, 14(5), 817-823. doi: 10.1016/j.dsx.2020.06.008

Vindegaard, M. & Benros, M. E. (2020). Covid-19 pandemic and mental health consequences: Systemic review of the current evidence. *Brain, behavior and immunity*, 89: 531-532. doi: 10.1016/j.bbi.2020.05.048.