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## MARYLAND ACADEMY OF NUTRITION AND DIETETICS

**Date:** January 27, 2021  
**Bill:** House Bill 123 – Preserve Telehealth Act of 2021  
**Committee:** House Health and Government Operations Committee  
The Honorable Shane Pendergrass, Chair  
**Position:** Support



The Maryland Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (MAND), is an organization representing approximately 1,200 licensed dietitians and nutritionists, dietetic interns, and students within the state of Maryland.

House Bill 123 makes clarifications to the State Medicaid program by broadly defining where patients can be cared for via telehealth including in their homes and will also allow for audio only communication. The bill additionally requires commercial insurers to pay the same for telehealth visits as they do for in person visits and to allow for audio only communication.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, now more than ever, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics believes it is vital to ensure everyone has timely, continuous access to safe, effective nutrition services that can improve their health and manage their chronic diseases. Registered dietitian nutritionists are recognized by the National Academy of Medicine (formerly Institute of Medicine) as the most qualified food and nutrition service providers. Studies show MNT provided by an RDN is linked to improved clinical outcomes and reduced costs related to physician's time, medication use and hospital admissions for people with obesity, diabetes and disorders of lipid metabolism, as well as other chronic diseases.

The Academy urges state Medicaid programs and private payers that are not already covering nutrition services provided via telehealth by registered dietitian nutritionists to immediately remove those limitations. This bill would address potential telehealth access to care issues by extending telehealth provisions enacted in Maryland in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby enabling Marylanders to better access health care services, especially in areas that lack broadband access infrastructure or broadband affordability.

MAND stands ready as a resource and partner in this important undertaking. Thank you for your consideration of our comments. We respectfully ask for a FAVORABLE report on House Bill 123.

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