



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Health and Government Operations Committee

February 10, 2021

House Bill 551 Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Coverage and Reimbursement of Telehealth Services

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, Delegate Bagnall, and members of the House and Government Operations Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of House Bill 551 Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Coverage and Reimbursement of Telehealth Services.

MRHA supports this legislation expands the reimbursement of telehealth by Medicaid to include synchronous and asynchronous interactions, audio only service delivery, and Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM) services. It is essential to the health of all Marylanders to have access to equitable and quality behavioral health services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rural Marylanders in particular suffer from lack of coordinated and accessible behavioral health services. Further, many areas in rural Maryland do not have the infrastructure to support high speed broadband traditional video telehealth services. This legislation incorporates the necessary reimbursement for audio only service delivery that rural Marylanders would greatly benefit from.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland.

Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

And while Maryland is one of the richest states, there is great disparity in how wealth is distributed. The greatest portion of wealth resides around the Baltimore/Washington Region; while further away from the I-95 corridor, differences in the social and economic environment are very apparent. MRHA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we thank you for your consideration.

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