



**Committee: Senate Finance Committee**

**Bill Number: Senate Bill 534**

**Title: Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2023**

**Hearing Date: February 22, 2023**

**Position: Support**

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The Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors of Maryland (LCPCM) supports *Senate Bill 534 – Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2023*. This bill would continue to require insurers, including the Maryland Medicaid Program, to reimburse for telehealth services provided through audio-only and provide payment parity for telehealth services.

Prior to the health care pandemic, Marylanders across the state experienced difficulties accessing behavioral health services. The onset of COVID in 2020 exacerbated that demand for behavioral health services, at a time when we know that there are not enough behavioral health providers overall.

One way licensed clinical professional counselors (LCPC) have adapted is by providing more services via telehealth. Unfortunately, we know that using video format has not been available to everyone, for a variety of reasons. In instances where clients do not have a smartphone or computer, reliable internet, or sufficient privacy, professional counselors have been able to provide needed services via telephone to clients. This has ensured continuity of care, and has allowed individuals seeking services for the first time, or returning to care, the ability to access services when they need it. We know that the ability to provide behavioral health services via telehealth, including audio-only, will continue to be needed post-COVID.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony, and we urge a favorable vote. If we can provide any further information, please contact Michael Paddy at [mpaddy@policypartners.net](mailto:mpaddy@policypartners.net).