TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 534
Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2023
Before the Senate Finance Committee
By Shruti Police, Intern, Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative, Inc.
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Chair Griffith, Vice-Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 534. We also thank Senator Gile for being the lead sponsor for this bill. I am submitting this testimony today as an intern on behalf of our individual organization, Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative, Inc., as we have not reviewed this legislation with the full Maryland Health Care for All! Coalition. Our mission is to ensure that all Marylanders have access to quality affordable health care coverage.

This bill would extend until June 30, 2025, the inclusion of certain audio-only telephone conversations under the definition of "telehealth" for purposes of reimbursement and coverage of telehealth services by the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and other insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations. Many Marylanders, especially vulnerable and underserved populations, rely on telehealth to continue to receive care. Audio-only telehealth is especially important because 520,000 Maryland households do not have reliable broadband Internet at home, and close to 290,000 households do not have a desktop, laptop, or tablet.[1] Therefore, SB534 would help protect equitable health care delivery gains in Maryland.

We thank the Committee for its recognized efforts toward improving access to quality, affordable health care for all Marylanders, and for passing the original Preserve Telehealth Access Act in 2021 to include audio-only telehealth. Thanks to you Maryland has one of the top five health care systems in the nation and SB 534 will continue Maryland's leadership. We urge the Committee to give a favorable report for Senate Bill 534.