



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of SB534
Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2023**

Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Fellow Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

During the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, as we all stayed home to slow the spread of the virus, many Marylanders had to utilize telehealth to obtain routine health care. Patients and providers throughout Maryland used telehealth to maintain continuity of care. Emergency federal and state waivers during the declared public health emergency allowed telehealth to ramp up quickly. During the 2021 General Assembly Session, led by Chairman Griffith, the legislature passed the Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2021 ([SB 3](#) / [HB 123](#)).

This landmark legislation allowed health care providers to continue delivering safe, reliable care via telehealth at the right place, right time, and the right modality for patients. The bill permanently removed originating and distant site restrictions and expanded remote patient monitoring (RPM) coverage for Medicaid participants. It also allowed providers to continue using audio-only means, such as a standard phone call, to deliver appropriate health care services and required reimbursement parity, meaning services delivered in-person and those delivered via telehealth are to be paid at the same rate. However, the continuation of audio-only telehealth services and reimbursement parity flexibilities were slated to sunset on June 30, 2023.

Senate Bill 534 continues the success of the original Preserve Telehealth Access Act by extending the existing flexibilities through June 30, 2025. I have requested an amendment to require the Maryland Health Care Commission to submit a follow-up study to the report required under the 2021 legislation. As noted by the Commission, more data is needed to “compare telehealth to in-person care and fully understand the impact of using audio-only and audio-visual technologies in somatic and behavioral health.”

The changes made in 2021 are critical, not just for care delivered during a once in a lifetime pandemic, but also for providing access to needed care to all Marylanders, from the Eastern Shore, to Western Maryland. Telehealth can be the difference between a visit to a health care provider, or no care at all.

This legislation is a measured approach to continue current telehealth policies while fully understanding the role of telehealth in our health care system. I respectfully request a favorable report.