



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA)

To the Senate Finance Committee

Chair: Senator Melony Griffith

February 21, 2023

Senate Bill 534: Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2023

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier and members of the Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 534, Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2023.

MRHA strongly believes that access to telehealth services improves health, especially for those in rural communities. According to the CDC, people who live in rural communities are more likely to die from five of the top leading causes of death.¹ Moreover, rural communities face countless barriers to care including scarcity of services, insufficient transportation, lack of internet availability, and a lack of trained physicians.² Preserving telehealth services is the answer to these problems.

Access to telehealth services means all Marylanders, but especially rural residents, can access the services and specialists they need. Additionally, individuals who normally wouldn't seek care due to time restrictions, mobility issues, or a lack of transportation will now be able to schedule and keep appointments.¹ Telehealth services are effective in providing counseling care, as well as routine monitoring of chronic conditions.¹ The right to health and health care is upheld by maintaining telehealth services.

To ensure Marylanders continue to have access to quality, convenient care, we urge you to support Senate Bill 534 - Preserve Telehealth Act of 2023.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Dayton, MS, NREMT, CNE, Executive Director

jdayton@mdruralhealth.org

1. Telehealth in rural communities. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/factsheets/telehealth-in-rural-communities.htm>. Published September 8, 2022. Accessed February 19, 2023.
2. Douthit N, Kiv S, Dwolatzky T, Biswas S. Exposing some important barriers to health care access in the rural USA. *Public Health*. 2015;129(6):611-620. doi:10.1016/j.puhe.2015.04.001