



Committee: Senate Finance Committee

Bill Title: Senate Bill 582 – Behavioral Health Care - Treatment and Access (Behavioral Health Model for Maryland)

Hearing Date: March 7, 2023

Position: Support

The Maryland Nurses Association (MNA) supports *Senate Bill 582 – Behavioral Health Care – Treatment and Access*. The bill provides for the creation of comprehensive public health plan to address access behavioral health access issues. The bill also provides for the extension of fair and consistent reimbursement rules to continue the support of telehealth to 2025. We would like to continue to highlight the bill’s support of audio-only visits, which are critical to serve communities without access to broadband or have limited technology resources.

Under our Total Cost of Care Model in Maryland, it is critical that health care providers continue to be able to utilize telehealth to communicate efficiently and effectively with patients. According to the American Hospital Association Center for Health Innovation:ⁱ

“Telehealth and digital health care enable a model of care that is ubiquitous and seamless, more affordable and integrated into patients’ lives. In the shift to demand-driven health care, telehealth becomes the patient’s first — and most frequent — point of access for urgent care, triage for emergent conditions, specialty consults, post-discharge management, medication education, behavioral health counseling, chronic care management and more.”

Telehealth can be used to:

- Increase access to primary care services, urgent care, and specialist services in shortage areas;
- Support facilities and programs in managing the use of the use of their ambulatory care space. If some patients can be treated through telehealth, it is a more efficient use of resources; and
- Increase patient satisfaction. Patients can probably be seen more quickly and without having to take time off from work.

We ask for a favorable report on this legislation. If we can provide additional perspective on telehealth, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.

ⁱ The American Hospital Association Center for Health Innovation. “Telehealth: A Path to Virtual Integrated Care”. February 2019. https://www.aha.org/system/files/media/file/2019/02/MarketInsights_TeleHealthReport.pdf