



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
HOUSE HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

Senate Bill 534: Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2023

March 21, 2023

Written Testimony Only

POSITION: FAVORABLE

On behalf of the members of the Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM), we appreciate the opportunity to express our support for Senate Bill 534. HFAM represents skilled nursing centers and assisted living communities in Maryland, as well as associate businesses that offer products and services to healthcare providers. Our members provide services and employ individuals in nearly every jurisdiction of the state.

Senate Bill 534 extends to June 30, 2025, the inclusion of certain audio-only telephone conversations under the definition of "telehealth" for the purpose of certain provisions of law relating to reimbursement and coverage of telehealth by the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and certain insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations; it also requires the Maryland Medical Health Care Commission to study and make recommendations regarding the delivery of health care services through telehealth by December 1, 2024.

Telehealth services are a way for healthcare providers to deliver care to patients remotely without an in-person visit. Healthcare providers have been increasingly using telehealth. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2021, 37% of adults used telemedicine in the past 12 months. In addition, telemedicine use increased with age and was higher among women compared with men.

Benefits of telehealth services include improved access to patient care, convenience, and slowing the spread of infection. Improved technology has made telehealth easier; however, inequities regarding broadband access make audio-only telehealth coverage important to Marylanders across the state. The accessibility of internet services intersects with existing health, geographic, and socioeconomic disparities.

Audio-only telehealth services can help address the needs of individuals who have difficulty accessing technologies, especially those in rural and economically disadvantaged communities. Together, we must ensure all Marylanders have access to critical healthcare resources. Telehealth and audio-only telehealth services can help improve both access to care and health equity.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report from the Committee on Senate Bill 534.

Submitted by:

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