



Susan O'Neill, Chair

Charlotte Davis, Executive Director

March 20, 2023

The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
241 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Support
Senate Bill 534 – Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2023

Dear Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk:

The Rural Maryland Council submits this letter of support for **Senate Bill 534 – Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2023** which will be heard in the Health and Government Operations Committee on Tuesday, March 21, 2023 at 1:00pm.

Senate Bill 534 extends critical telehealth provisions that were urgently put in place when the state of emergency and catastrophic COVID-19 health emergency was proclaimed and began to spread throughout Maryland in 2019. This bill extends, through June 30, 2025, provisions of law that specify that (1) “telehealth” includes specified audio-only telephone conversations between a health care provider and a patient and (2) reimbursement for a telehealth service must be made on the same basis and at the same rate as if the service were delivered in person. These provisions apply to both Medicaid and commercial health insurance. The Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) must study and make recommendations regarding the delivery of health care services through telehealth, as specified, and report to the General Assembly by December 1, 2024.

Senate Bill 534 continues to allow for safer means of healthcare and provides easier access to healthcare for rural Marylanders. While telehealth is a more accessible option to many, those in certain parts of the state do not either own the proper materials for a telehealth visit or live in areas that lack proper broadband access to participate in a telehealth visit. By continuing to include audio-only and remote patient monitoring services to the services covered under telehealth, it reaches those who would have been cut off from these services because of a lack of digital literacy or technology. Also, allowing Distant Site providers to provide services to a program recipient from any location increases the number of possible providers for each individual, allowing for more coverage and better health. The Rural Maryland council respectfully asks for your favorable support on SB534 Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2023.

Thank you for the opportunity to support Senate Bill 534.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Davis
Executive Director

Cc. Senators Gile, Beidle, Ellis, Griffith, Hershey, Klausmeier, and Mautz