



TO: The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair
 Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee
 The Honorable Dawn Gile

FROM: J. Steven Wise
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DATE: March 21, 2023

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 534 – *Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2023*

On behalf of the Maryland State Medical Society, the Maryland Academy of Family Physicians, the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Maryland Section of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers, and the Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition, we submit this letter of **support** for Senate Bill 534.

This legislation extends until 2025 the current sunset on two telehealth measures that were adopted in 2021 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These are: 1) making the definition of telehealth include audio-only communications with patients, and 2) ensuring payment parity between in-person patient encounters and telehealth encounters.

When these measures were adopted, the General Assembly asked the Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) to study them and report back at the end of 2023. With regard to audio-only encounters, MHCC found that “providers and patients find audio-only visits to be of value, resulting in high patient satisfaction, better care, and decreased no show rates”, and recommended continuing this policy. As to payment parity, MHCC recommended continuing this policy for an additional 24-month period while it conducts further study.

While our organizations support making these measures permanent, we appreciate MHCC’s request to further study the payment parity data and therefore support Senate Bill 534 in its current form.