



**House Health & Government Operations Committee
March 21, 2023**

**Senate Bill 534
Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2023
Support**

NCADD-Maryland supports Senate Bill 534 – Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2023. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us a great deal about our health care system. One of the obvious lessons is that telehealth is a life-saving tool in the delivery of health care services, including substance use disorder and mental health treatment.

Surveys have shown both consumer satisfaction and efficacy. The Maryland Addiction Directors Council conducted a survey of clients that showed that 78% of those using telehealth had a positive experience either all of the time or most of the time. Specifically with the use of audio-only telehealth, 80% of respondents reported positive experiences all or most of the time.

With the existence of a massive digital divide, the use of the telephone has been the only way tens of thousands of Marylanders have been able to access health care services. When the federal public emergency declaration is lifted this spring, the digital divide will unfortunately still be with us. We therefore must continue the use of telehealth, including audio-only technology.

With the two guiding principles that telehealth should be used when clinically appropriate, and when preferred by the consumer, the use of telehealth should continue indefinitely. And with the myriad regulations and safeguards that already exist, there should be no hesitation to continue audio-only to ensure everyone has access to care.

We strongly urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 534.

The Maryland Affiliate of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD-Maryland) is a statewide organization that works to influence public and private policies on addiction, treatment, and recovery, reduce the stigma associated with the disease, and improve the understanding of addictions and the recovery process. We advocate for and with individuals and families who are affected by alcoholism and drug addiction.