

**House Health & Government Operations Committee
Senate Bill 534: Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2023**

Support

March 21, 2023

Maryland's Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers represents social workers across the state. We support Senate Bill 534 and urge you to vote in favor of authorizing continued reimbursement for telehealth access by way of continued inclusion of audio-only telephone conversations as a reimbursed healthcare service to 2025 and beyond.

This bill touches on a significant equity issue. Providers experience clients who have malfunctions that require audio-only psychotherapy sessions because their phones overheat, the sound or something else fails on computer systems, or their internet goes down. Many of the clients are technologically challenged, are not native to using technology, are older, or do not consistently use video capabilities to receive healthcare. Clients who use audio-only sessions express that audio-only delivered psychotherapy as a healthcare service has been an effective and stabilizing modality for them and they appreciate having it. In many cases, clients would not be able to receive psychotherapy to stabilize mental health without having access audio only sessions.

Please continue this vital service. Please vote yes on SB 534.

Sincerely,

Members of The Private Practice Committee
National Association of Social Workers–Maryland