



Maryland Addiction Directors Council

Senate Bill 534 – Preserve Telehealth Access Act 2023

House Health & Government Operations Committee

March 21, 2023

SUPPORT

Maryland Addictions Director’s Council (MADC) provides over 1,00 substance use disorder residential treatment beds as well as a full continuum of outpatient treatment (PHP, IOP, OP) across Maryland. We strongly support Senate Bill 534 – Preserve Telehealth Access Act 2023, which will extend telehealth options for two more years.

MADC believes telehealth should continue with unrestricted telehealth use for all levels of care including residential treatment. MADC strongly supports the unrestricted usage of telehealth as a service delivery method that was allowed under the public health emergency and the Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2021. We support client choice when it comes to in-person versus virtual communication. Above all, the need to continue unrestricted use of telehealth as a service delivery method is essential in our continuing battle against the opioid overdose crisis.

With the fentanyl epidemic, lethality has soared, and clients come to treatment in great need. Approximately 1,000 people a year for the last three years have died in Baltimore City alone from opioid overdose with most of these deaths due to fentanyl overdose. Providers need every tool available to try to save people’s lives.

MADC conducted two surveys on client satisfaction with telehealth during the pandemic. In June 2020 MADC conducted a statewide survey of 439 outpatient and residential clients in SUD treatment. In June 2020 over 90% of clients responded that his/her experience with telehealth treatment had been positive. In February 2021 MADC conducted a follow up using the same survey with 197 residential clients in SUD treatment. In February 2021 over 90% of the clients “agreed” or “strongly agreed” his/her experience with the sound and video for telehealth as well as the actual treatment - group sessions and individual sessions was positive.

Telehealth provides SUD clients who are rebuilding lives with the flexible treatment options needed. As clients move from more intensive levels of treatment and re-enter employment, telehealth provides flexible scheduling that supports the continuing self-sufficiency and independence needed to for recovery in the community. MADC continues to offer our experiences as long-standing community-based treatment programs during these incredibly difficult times to the Maryland Department of Health and work with them in partnership in moving forward to stop overdose deaths.

We ask for a favorable report on Senate Bill 534.