



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

March 13, 2024

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: Senate Bill 786 – Task Force on Access to Pharmacy Services and the Impact of Telepharmacy in Maryland – Letter of Concern

Dear Chair Beidle and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) respectfully submits this letter of concern for Senate Bill 786 – Task Force on Access to Pharmacy Services and the Impact of Telepharmacy in Maryland.

SB 786 establishes the Task Force on Access to Pharmacy Services and the Impact of Telepharmacy in Maryland to analyze access to pharmacy services, and identify barriers to pharmacy services and telepharmacy. The Task Force will study barriers to accessing pharmacy services for all residents of the State with a focus on rural communities, and identify barriers to pharmacists providing pharmacy services and telepharmacy in areas of the State where a significant number of residents travel more than 10 miles to obtain needed medications. The bill also requires the Task Force to report its findings and recommendations on methods to increase access to pharmacy services, and the use of telepharmacy in the State.

The Department supports the intent of this bill to better understand barriers to pharmacy services and access. When implemented effectively, telepharmacy has shown to decrease pharmacy deserts and increase access to pharmacy services, especially for individuals in medically underserved areas or populations (MUA/P).¹ However, a more concerning shortcoming of telepharmacy services that should be considered is the decrease in interaction between provider and patients due to the existence of physical distance.²

SB 786 requires the Deputy Secretary of Public Health Services or the Secretary's Designee to co-chair the Task Force, and the Department to jointly staff the Task Force. The Department is concerned that Public Health Services does not house the requisite resources and expertise on telepharmacy services to effectively co-chair the Task Force, which may impact the Task Force's

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10425826/>

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6681067/#:~:text=A%20decreased%20human%20interaction%20between,tel,epharmacy%20%5B6%2C7%5D.>

ability to efficiently perform its duties. As a result, the Department respectfully recommends that these responsibilities be assigned to a more suitable entity with extensive work on telepharmacy services. This will ensure an effective and successful implementation. As currently drafted and because of the need to hire additional experts in these fields, the Department anticipates SB786 would have a fiscal impact at an estimated cost of \$103,793 for fiscal year (FY) 2025 and \$88,802 for FY 2026 to cover staffing and other operational costs.

If you have any further questions, please contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director, Office of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'LH Scott', is positioned above the typed name.

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary