



February 5, 2024

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary
House Ways & Means Committee
House Office Building - Room 131
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – HB 522: Public Schools - Student Telehealth Appointments - Policy and Access

Dear Chairman Atterbeary and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS/WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS/WPS supports Senate Bill 522: Public Schools - Student Telehealth Appointments - Policy and Access (SB 522), because allowing student telehealth appointments during school hours can promote student well-being, reduce barriers to healthcare access, and support academic success. MPS/WPS understand the difficulty a school may have with finding an appropriate space for such visits, though most could occur in the school's health suite; however, MPS/WPS believes that the benefits outlined below far outweigh this logistical concern.

Telehealth appointments during school hours can make it easier for students and parents to attend appointments without disrupting the school or work day. Students, who may typically miss a full or half day of school to attend doctor visits, could now schedule appointments during breaks or lunchtime without missing classes. By reducing the need for students to leave school for medical appointments, less disruption occurs to their educational routine, allowing them to stay focused on their studies. SB 522 also encourages parental involvement with their children's healthcare because telehealth allows parents to attend appointments remotely without taking time off work.

In addition, SB 522 improves access to healthcare for those students who may not have easy access to healthcare facilities or transportation, as telehealth provides a convenient way to receive medical care without traveling. Furthermore, telehealth appointments can be more cost-effective for families, as they eliminate the need for transportation costs and the potential loss of wages due to time off work for both parents and students.



For all the reasons stated above, MPS/WPS ask this committee for a favorable report on HB 522. If you have any questions regarding this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com.

Respectfully submitted,
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society
Legislative Action Committee