



Maryland
Hospital Association

House Bill 869- Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2025

Position: *Support*

March 20, 2025

Senate Finance Committee

MHA Position

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of House Bill 869. This legislation builds on the success of the Preserve Telehealth Access Acts of 2021 and 2023 by removing the current sunset to permanently allow for audio-only modalities and reimbursement parity in Maryland.

Audio-only telehealth is critical to ensure that all Marylanders have access to care. The digital divide in Maryland between households with high-speed internet and corresponding devices with audio-visual capabilities is significant and cuts across traditional rural/urban lines. For urban and rural areas, audio-only health services may be the only modality a significant portion of their population can access. To restrict coverage and reimbursement for audio-only health services would essentially isolate these Marylanders from necessary health care, especially in the aftermath of a pandemic.

Commercial and public payers started to systematically reimburse telehealth services for the first time during the pandemic. This allows providers to sustainably deliver care. As virtual visits became the safest, and often only, form of health care delivery during the pandemic, providers rapidly scaled up technology (software and hardware), connectivity infrastructure, staffing, and IT support—in some cases purchasing devices for patients to use in their own homes. The original investment in and continued maintenance of those components will require adequate reimbursement if providers are to continue those services. Moreover, failing to continue reimbursement parity creates a disincentive for providers to continue offering their expertise via telehealth—meaning patients will again have to travel, find childcare, and/or take precious time off from work to meet all their health care needs. It would be a severe disservice to Marylanders to indirectly dissuade telehealth use by paying providers less for a vital, valuable, and equivalent service.

We have all seen first-hand what health care and policy experts know—telehealth broadens access to care, improves patient outcomes and satisfaction, and helps address health inequities. Quite simply, telehealth works for Marylanders.

MHA supported the Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2021 and 2023. This critical legislation lowered barriers to deliver safe, reliable care via telehealth to meet patients where they are by permanently removing originating and distant site restrictions and expanding remote patient

monitoring (RPM) coverage for Medicaid participants. The 2021 law also allowed appropriate health care services to be delivered via audio-only modalities (i.e., a traditional phone call) and reimbursement parity between services delivered in-person and those delivered via telehealth. These flexibilities were slated to sunset June 30, 2025.

Patients continue to use telehealth services—including audio-only—at higher levels than before COVID-19. That is why reimposing barriers to telehealth, such as allowing these flexibilities to sunset, will not be a return to normal. It would be an undeniable step backward for Maryland’s commitment to furthering health care access and addressing widespread health inequities.

For these reasons, we request a favorable report on HB 869.

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