



March 20, 2025

**Senate Finance Committee  
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

*HB 869 – Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2025*

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 100,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.

**Behavioral Health System Baltimore supports HB 869 – Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2025.** This commonsense bill removes the sunset on audio-only telehealth reimbursement and telehealth payment parity to establish the current telehealth policy as the state’s permanent policy.

Maryland expanded telehealth reimbursement for behavioral health during the COVID-19 pandemic. This service played a huge role in maintaining access to services and continues to be critical to ensure consumer access. Many beneficiaries may not have reliable transportation and may prefer telehealth options to aid in work and childcare scheduling. It is essential to maintain payment parity to avoid a reduction in telehealth access or behavioral health provider capacity.

Audio-only services are also critical in recognition of the large proportion of Marylanders who do not have the data plans and technological hardware for a video telehealth appointment. Audio-only services have become commonplace, and 44 states have continued to offer these services. Maryland should remain one of them.

BHSB acknowledges that HB 869 has been amended differently compared to the Senate crossfile. It is not clear to BHSB that the additional telehealth practitioner stipulations included in HB 869 are necessary, but we support any compromise that leads to passage. We urge the Committees of jurisdiction to develop consensus language.

Maryland has used the current telehealth regime for over four years with good results. The policies have fostered access and given beneficiaries the choice of audio-only telehealth, video telehealth, and in-person services. They should be extended as permanent policies. **We urge a favorable report for HB 869.**

***For more information, please contact BHSB Policy Director Dan Rabbitt at 443-401-6142***