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Susan O'Neill, Chair

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Testimony in Support of
Senate Bill 372 – Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2025
Senate Finance Committee
February 5, 2025

The Rural Maryland Council supports Senate Bill 372 – Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2025. This bill aims to remove the time limit on how long certain audio-only phone calls can be considered “telehealth.” This change will apply to the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and several insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations regarding their coverage and reimbursement policies. It will also eliminate the requirement for these programs and entities to provide reimbursement for health care services delivered via telehealth within a specific timeframe and rate. This bill relates to the coverage and payment for health care services provided through telehealth.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, rural areas have faced a significant shortage of healthcare workers, exacerbating existing challenges in accessing medical care. This shortage has highlighted the urgent need for telehealth services, which can offer vital healthcare support remotely. In many rural regions, residents struggle to obtain necessary medical attention due to long distances to healthcare facilities and a limited number of available practitioners, creating healthcare deserts. Telehealth can help bridge this gap by providing patients with easier access to consultations, follow-up care, and expert advice, thereby improving overall health outcomes in these underserved communities.

Implementing telehealth services in rural areas can significantly enhance access to healthcare by addressing common obstacles faced by patients. One major challenge is the difficulty of traveling long distances to receive specialty care, which often leads to delays in treatment and increased stress for patients. Telehealth can mitigate these issues by allowing patients to consult with healthcare providers remotely, thereby reducing the need for extensive travel. This approach not only saves time and transportation costs but also ensures that patients receive timely medical attention and follow-up care, improving overall health outcomes in underserved rural communities.

The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of Senate Bill 372.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county, and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county, and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions.

“A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland”