



MedStar Health

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**HB 869 – Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2025**

Position: **Support**

House Health and Government Operations Committee

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MedStar Health is the largest healthcare provider in Maryland and the Washington, D.C. region. MedStar Health offers a comprehensive spectrum of clinical services through over 300 care locations, including 10 hospitals, 33 urgent care clinics, ambulatory care centers and an extensive array of primary and specialty care providers. We are also home to the MedStar Health Research Institute and a comprehensive scope of health-related organizations all recognized regionally and nationally for excellence. MedStar Health has one of the largest graduate medical education programs in the country, training 1,150 medical residents annually, and is the medical education and clinical partner of Georgetown University. As a not-for-profit healthcare system, MedStar Health is committed to its patient-first philosophy, emphasizing care, compassion, and clinical excellence, supported by a dedicated team of more than 35,000 physicians, nurses, and many other clinical and non-clinical associates.

HB 869 makes permanent several policy changes put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic to remove barriers to telehealth. The legislation allows telehealth services via audio-only modalities and requires reimbursement parity for telehealth and in-person services. These provisions under the current law are set to expire on June 30, 2025. Similar legislation passed in 2023 also directed the Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) to study and make recommendations on the impact of these temporary changes to telehealth. In October 2024, MHCC submitted its final telehealth report to the General Assembly. The report recommendations align with the provisions included in HB 869.

The critical flexibilities relating to telehealth established during the pandemic have been crucial in allowing healthcare providers to respond swiftly to an urgent need to improve access to care by expanding eligible telehealth services, patients, and care sites. MedStar Health has experienced a rapid transformation, with telehealth now normalized into how we treat patients in the region. In all of our hospitals, palliative care specialists can be added to the team, all seven days of the week, to manage complex care situations, and; in all 33 of our urgent care locations, a patient can add multiple care specialists to the team. Additionally, our behavioral health providers continue to have greater than 60% of visits via telehealth, with a no-show rate that remains half of what it was when only in-person visits were available, resulting in tens of thousands of additional visits with the same resources. While the majority of MedStar Health's telehealth encounters do occur over video, older patients and those without internet access have benefited tremendously from the ability for audio-only telehealth sessions, where clinically appropriate.

Without intervention, the telehealth flexibilities put in place during the pandemic allowing for this evolution in care delivery will sunset later this year. The experience over the last several years demonstrates that telehealth is an important and viable patient-centered tool to expand access, provide care more efficiently, and address issues of health equity and disparities across our state.

For the reasons above, MedStar Health urges a ***favorable*** report on **HB 869**.

**It's how we treat people.**