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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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SB372

Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee;

Thank you for the opportunity to present SB 372, the Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2025. SB 372 is the cross-file of HB848 that recently passed this Committee and the House of Delegates. As you may recall, they repeal the sunset on audio-only telephone conversations being included in the definition of "telehealth," for improved accessibility of telehealth services in the state. They are not in the same posture; the House Bill allows opiates to be prescribed and the Senate Bill does not.

Audio-only telephone conversations have been considered part of the state definition of "telehealth" since 2021, and that consideration was renewed and extended to June of this year during the 2023 legislative session. Including audio-only telephone conversations in the definition of "telehealth" will preserve and expand access to vital mental health care for many individuals in Maryland, along with insurance coverage. Audio-only telephone calls are an accessible solution for patients who cannot receive in-person care, such as incarcerated persons, the elderly, disabled or impaired patients, and individuals who live in care deserts where options for treatment are limited. In addition to being a private and convenient option for care, audio-only telephone calls make telehealth services available to patients who face technology or connectivity barriers.

Continuing to consider audio-only telephone conversations as a part of telehealth care will also expand insurance language to include audio-only options in their coverage for mental health. Making this definition permanent is the right step to take towards prioritizing mental health outcomes in Maryland and preserving the accessibility of mental health care for everyone who needs it.

I respectfully request a "Favorable Report" on SB 372.