

# APTA Maryland

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### Our Vision

*Transforming the diverse communities in Maryland to advance health and wellness by optimizing movement and function across the lifespan.*

February 13, 2025

The Honorable Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Chair  
House Health and Government Operations Committee  
240 House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: House Bill 869 – Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2025**  
**Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk,

The American Physical Therapy Association Maryland is writing to register our strong support of House Bill 869. This bill will repeal the limitation on the period during which the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and certain insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations are required to provide reimbursement for certain health care services provided through telehealth. Specifically retaining the payment parity provisions and the use of audio-only technology. In all instances with telehealth, it is important to allow providers and patients to determine what is best and appropriate to be delivered via telehealth.

### Telehealth and Implications for Physical Therapy Practice

The COVID-19 pandemic forced health care providers and payers to reconsider how care is delivered in order to reduce the risk of further spreading infection. Access to telehealth has become of paramount importance to ensure the safety of patients and their physical therapy providers. States and many private payers have created telehealth policies that have ensured access to the health care, including physical therapy, that patients need.

While telehealth played a crucial role in providing needed care during the pandemic, it has become increasingly clear that its many benefits can be utilized well beyond. For patients who have difficulty leaving their homes without assistance, have underlying health conditions, lack transportation, or need to travel long distances, the ability to access physical therapy via telehealth greatly reduces the burden on the patient and family when accessing care.

Telehealth is particularly well-suited for physical therapy, especially when used as an enhancement to services rather than exclusively as a replacement. Education and home exercise programs, including those focused on falls prevention, function particularly well with telehealth because the physical therapist is able to evaluate and treat the patient within the real-life context of their home environment, which is not easily replicable in the clinic. Patient and

caregiver self-efficacy are inherent goals of care provided by physical therapists. A patient's and/or caregiver's ability to interact in their own environment with a therapist when they are facing a challenge, rather than waiting for the next appointment, can be invaluable in supporting the adoption of effective strategies to improve function, enhance safety, and promote engagement.

## **Payment Parity**

Payment parity for telehealth is critical, for several reasons. First, most of the cost of a service is attributed to the work relative value unit (RVU) of the Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®) code. Accordingly, the work RVU does not change when care is delivered via telehealth. Second, the practice expense may actually be higher when providing care via telehealth. Although a provider may offer some services via telecommunications technology, they most likely also are continuing to provide in-person care in an office. Delivering care via telecommunications technology requires an ongoing investment in technology, IT support, HIPAA-compliant telehealth platforms, and more. Accordingly, the practice expense for telehealth is higher in many instances. Third, liability and malpractice risks are similar to those for in-person services — and may even incur additional costs. For instance, some liability insurers will require providers to purchase a supplemental telehealth insurance policy.

APTA Maryland supports legislation or regulations that would PERMANENTLY allow all physical therapy providers to use telehealth as well as require coverage and reimbursement under Medicaid, Worker's Compensation, and commercial plans to the same extent as for physical therapist services furnished in-person.

**For the reasons noted above we ask for a favorable report on House Bill 869.**

Sincerely,



Roy Film, PT, DPT, MPT  
President, APTA Maryland