



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA)

To the House Health and Government Operations Committee

Chair: Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk

March 5, 2025

House Bill 1474 – Licensed Professional Counselors - Telehealth – Students Enrolled in Institutions of Higher Education

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison and members of the Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in support of House Bill 1474, Licensed Professional Counselors - Telehealth – Students Enrolled in Institutions of Higher Education. This legislation is critical in allowing out-of-state licensed counselors to continue previously established therapeutic relationships with out-of-state students attending institutions of higher education in Maryland.

At higher education institutions in rural Maryland, like Frostburg State University and Salisbury University, out-of-state enrollment ranges from 25% to 40%³. Many of these students may already come to Maryland with established mental health care providers from their home states. Without passing this legislation, they risk disruption in their care, especially in rural areas where services are already limited.

Between 2007 to 2017, U.S. college students seeking counseling increased from 19% to 34%, and mental health diagnoses rose by two-thirds, further emphasizing the growing need for access to mental health care and resources⁴.

Meanwhile, many rural areas across the U.S. already face significant healthcare provider shortages, particularly in mental health care, with over 60% of rural residents living in designated mental health provider shortage areas¹. In Maryland, the need for mental health professionals is only being met at 19.4%, compared to 27.7% nationally².

If passed, HB1474 would provide continued support to these students by ensuring they can maintain access to their existing mental health providers through telehealth, with up to five visits per month or 15 visits per year.

For these reasons, MRHA urges for your support on HB1474.

On Behalf of the Maryland Rural Health Association,

Alexis Garcia, Legislative and Policy Intern

1. Morales DA, Barksdale CL, Beckel-Mitchener AC. A call to action to address rural mental health disparities. *Journal of Clinical and Translational Science*. 2020;4(5):463-467. doi:10.1017/cts.2020.42
2. Mental Health and Substance Use State Fact Sheets | KFF. KFF. Published March 20, 2023. <https://www.kff.org/statedata/mental-health-and-substance-use-state-fact-sheets/maryland/>
3. USM Data Journals - Tuition Status by Student Level report for University System of Maryland- USM IRIS. <https://www.usmd.edu/IRIS/DataJournal/Enrollment/?report=Tuition-Status-by-Student-Level>
4. Lipson SK, Lattie EG, Eisenberg D. Increased rates of mental health service utilization by U.S. college Students: 10-Year Population-Level Trends (2007–2017). *Psychiatric Services*. 2018;70(1):60-63. doi:10.1176/appi.ps.201800332