TESTIMONY TO THE HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

HB 869: Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2025

POSITION: Support

BY: Linda Kohn, President

DATE: February 13, 2025

The League of Women Voters Maryland is a nonpartisan organization that works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. It believes every Maryland resident should have access to affordable, equitable, quality health care. However, that access can be limited by a resident's physical circumstances and geographic location. To achieve a more equitable distribution of services and delivery of care, the League endorses increasing the availability of resources in medically underserved areas. The League thus supports **HB 869: Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2025**.

Due to the difficulty of accessing in-person health care, telehealth services developed during the Covid-19 pandemic expanded care options available to Marylanders. Preserving availability and reimbursement of these services will continue to reduce health care barriers. It would ensure that some of our most vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, disabled, and those without easy access to reliable transportation or child care, can nonetheless continue to get reliable medical care. For Maryland residents in rural areas, who often have limited access to specialist care, telehealth would enable them to receive the quality care they are entitled to.

Telehealth is also essential in bridging the gap between the increasing need for mental health and substance use services and their limited availability due to workforce shortages. Screening, evaluation, and treatment of behavioral health issues via telehealth can help to manage problems before they become crises. Telehealth, using technology to efficiently deliver healthcare over distance, is an important option to use to ensure that Marylanders get the health care they need.

The League of Women Voters Maryland, representing 1,500+ concerned members throughout Maryland, urges a favorable report on House Bill 869.