

Testimony in Support of HB 869 Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2025

Thank you, Chair Delegate Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Delegate Cullison, and all the members of the Health and Government Operations Committee for addressing this critical health care issue concerning access to telehealth services. The University of Maryland, School of Social Work appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of HB 869. Social workers are often cited as the largest group of behavioral health service providers and the popularity and availability of telehealth services has extended the reach of behavioral health services. We remain committed to preparing social workers to provide effective telehealth services to meet the needs of our state.

The provision of telehealth behavioral health services has improved access to care by reducing many barriers and HB 869 aims to ensure continued access to telehealth services, including social work telehealth services. While this bill addresses the breath of health services provided through telehealth, in social work we have witnessed the many benefits for clients receiving telehealth behavioral health services.

Legislation to preserve telehealth in Maryland is crucial because it ensures continued access to healthcare services, particularly for vulnerable populations. Some benefits of telehealth care include: Equitable Access to Care: Many individuals, especially those in rural areas, low-income communities, or with mobility challenges, face barriers to in-person healthcare. Telehealth removes these barriers by allowing people to receive care from home. Behavioral Health Support: Telehealth has expanded access and reduced wait times, making services more accessible. For individuals struggling with anxiety, depression, or trauma, virtual options can be a lifeline. For those with chronic conditions or disabilities, maintaining telehealth ensures they can regularly consult with providers without the logistical burdens of transportation, time off work, or childcare concerns. Crisis Intervention: Social workers rely on telehealth to connect with clients in need of crisis intervention, case management, and support services. Preserving this option allows for real-time intervention in cases of intimate partner violence, substance abuse, or homelessness. Flexibility for Families and Caregiver: Parents, caregivers, and working individuals benefit from the flexibility of telehealth. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of telehealth in maintaining healthcare access during emergencies. Keeping telehealth in place ensures Maryland remains prepared for future public health crises.

Without legislation to protect telehealth services, many of these benefits could be lost, disproportionately affecting marginalized and at-risk populations. Thank you for your consideration of HB 869 which will uphold health equity, accessibility, and the well-being of all Maryland residents.

Respectfully submitted by



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cc: Other Sponsors of HB 869: Delegates Bagnall, Kerr, and Rosenberg