



Sheppard Pratt

Written Testimony – Damian Lang

House Bill 869 – Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2025

Health and Government Operations Committee

February 13, 2025

When COVID-19 began in Maryland, Sheppard Pratt worked tirelessly to ensure continued access to life-changing care. The pandemic significantly impacted mental health, but telehealth has been a game-changer. In 2024, we provided over **200,000 telehealth services statewide**.

Patients prefer telehealth, which has outcomes identical to in-person care when clinically appropriate. Despite efforts to return clients to in-person visits, **telehealth remains our highest-volume service**. If required to shift entirely to in-person care, we estimate losing **40% of our patients**—many of whom struggle with conditions like anxiety, PTSD, and severe depression. Removing telehealth flexibility would create unnecessary barriers to care.

Thanks to emergency orders enabling telehealth reimbursement, we have successfully expanded crisis services, outpatient mental health, and addiction services—including psychiatric medication management, psychotherapy, addiction counseling, and case management. Today, **60% of outpatient appointments are virtual**, serving over **10,000 patients statewide**.

Telehealth has helped thousands access care despite location, transportation, or other barriers. This has also **eased the burden on emergency departments** when beds are critically needed for acute care patients. Additionally, telehealth allows patients and families to maintain employment without missing work for in-person visits.

Approximately **15% of our services are audio-only**, ensuring access for those without video technology. This is especially critical for **historically marginalized communities, Medicaid recipients, the homeless, and those in crisis**. Many clients have phones but lack video access—without audio services, they will lose mental health treatment.

Sheppard Pratt urges a **favorable report on SB372, the Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2025**.