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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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Madam Chair Bagnall and distinguished members of the Health Committee, it is my pleasure to come before you and offer testimony in favor of **House Bill 1483: Clinical Professional Counseling - Out-of-State Providers - Use of Telehealth for Continuity of Care**. This bill aims to create a counseling continuity-of-care option for new Marylanders.

Each year, thousands of individuals move to Maryland for employment, military service, education, or other reasons. Many arrive in the middle of ongoing mental health treatment. Under current interstate licensing laws, when a patient crosses state lines their therapist may be required to immediately stop providing care, even when the treatment relationship is longstanding and conducted entirely via telehealth.

Continuity of mental health care is critical to successful treatment outcomes. Mental health treatment relies heavily on a therapeutic relationship built on trust and familiarity. When that relationship is abruptly disrupted, patients may be forced to start over with a new provider who must rebuild clinical history and rapport. For individuals managing depression, anxiety, trauma-related disorders, or substance use recovery, even a short interruption in care can lead to setbacks, increased symptoms, or crisis situations. Allowing patients a limited period to continue telehealth treatment with their existing provider ensures stability while they transition to care in Maryland.

Over the past few years, we have signed onto several interstate health compacts, including a Counseling Compact. While some compacts have begun issuing licenses, others have delayed enactment and left many without access to continuous mental health treatment. Even when these compacts become operational, new Maryland residents coming from non-participating states will still face barriers to continuing telehealth treatment with their existing providers.

As drafted, **HB1483** authorizes out-of-state licensed professional counselors to provide a limited number of mental telehealth services to their patients who are newly residing in Maryland. This exception requires that the provider is licensed and in good standing in their home state, has a preexisting relationship with the patient, and only provides telehealth services. The exception can only be used for six months.

In consultation with the Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists, we have prepared an amendment that would implement this continuity-of-care option through a temporary license rather than a limited licensure exception. This approach ensures that out-of-state providers remain subject to Maryland's professional standards, disciplinary authority, and liability framework while serving their patients during the transition period. With this amendment, **HB 1357** would expand on the temporary licensing option we created for out-of-state students last session.

I urge a favorable report on **House Bill 1357**.