

MELONY G. GRIFFITH

*Legislative District 25
Prince George's County*

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

Budget and Taxation Committee



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 220
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
301-858-3127 · 410-841-3127
800-492-7122 Ext. 3127
Melony.Griffith@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 27, 2021

Senate Bill 3 – Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2021

Testimony of Senator Melony G. Griffith (Favorable)

Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman and members of the Senate Finance Committee, I am pleased to present Senate Bill 3, which preserves access to telehealth services. I want to thank you, Senator Augustine, Senator Hershey and others who have worked to support telehealth in Maryland. This legislation comes as a result of countless hours of work by coalitions and stakeholders across the state. As you know, access to quality health care services has been a longstanding issue which has become even more significant with the pandemic. Maintaining and expanding access to care through telehealth would reduce barriers that exacerbate health disparities throughout Maryland.

SB3 would maintain telehealth through:

1. Audio-only telehealth services which are crucial to reaching every demographic with health needs. We know that older adults and low-income families are less likely to have access to a smartphone, webcam, or broadband internet and therefore may not be able to have video telehealth meetings with providers. Over 300,000 Marylanders living in rural areas do not have access to consistent broadband internet. Audio-only services allow us to bridge that digital divide. These groups are also considered high-risk for COVID-19 and therefore need another option for accessing care.
2. Ensuring the continued availability of Maryland Medicaid recipients to receive telehealth care in the sites where they are located by applying for waivers and waiver changes from the Centers of Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Maryland Medicaid recipients have increased their telehealth use during the public health emergency, showing their willingness to be adaptable in receiving care. Telehealth consultations that allow patients to be in their homes are likely to expand access and offer the same or similar benefits as in-person care.
3. Requiring insurers to reimburse services rendered through telehealth modalities at a fair rate. Thus, providing safeguards for providers being unfairly compensated for their expertise.

By enacting SB 3 we would ensure continued relationships between patients and providers. All while preparing Maryland to face future crises that would require patients to interact with their providers virtually when it is not safe to do so in person.

We should keep this tool in the toolbox and ensure that Marylanders have safe options to obtain high quality care in a way that makes the most sense for them and their provider. Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 3. I respectfully request a favorable report.