

February 10, 2021

The Honorable Del. Shane Pendergrass, Chairperson
Health and Government Operations
Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen St. RM. 241
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: **SUPPORT FOR HB 731** – Telehealth Services – Expansion

Dear Chairperson Pendergrass and Distinguished Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

I want to thank you for taking my written statement of support for HB 731 on telehealth reimbursement to be entered into the public hearing record. My name is Felicia Pressley and I am a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor who resides in Charles County and practices in Prince George's County, Maryland.

Reimbursement for telebehavioral health modalities is important to me because first of all I am a member of the African American community servicing African American clients. I am not seeing clients in person due to the pandemic and it is important to continue the care needed for all of my clients who are primarily African American. We have my community of African American have been disproportionately impacted by the Pandemic, COVID-19.

We are still in the throes of a global pandemic and the need for health care and mental health services has never been greater. COVID-19 has revealed systemic flaws in our mental health services for providers and clients alike. It is imperative that we remove barriers to life saving services in a responsible and urgent manner.

This bill will update what Maryland health care services the Medical Assistance Program is required to provide through telehealth by broadening the circumstances under which the Program is required to provide telehealth and telebehavioral health. It is critical to update current Maryland code to align with best practices in our field by requiring certain insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations to reimburse health care services provided through telehealth.

While we are working to upload and implement the Counseling Compact in this state and throughout the U.S., this immediate action, removing barriers to critical supports and supporting mental health providers by broadening reimbursements in Maryland, is essential for the wellbeing of residents, families, and a social services system overburdened by staggering need.

I strongly urge you to support HB 731.

Sincerely,

Felicia Pressley
Pressley Counseling and Wellness, Owner/Therapist
11298 Flagstaff Place, Waldorf, MD 20601

