



Committee: House Health and Government Affairs Committee

Bill Number: House Bill 731

Title: Telehealth Services – Expansion

Hearing Date: February 10, 2021

Position: Support

The Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors of Maryland (LCPCM) supports *House Bill 731 – Telehealth Services - Expansion*. This bill would require insurers, including the Maryland Medicaid Program, to reimburse for telehealth services provided through audio-only.

Prior to the current health care pandemic, Marylanders across the state experienced difficulties accessing behavioral health services. The onset of COVID last year has exacerbated that demand for behavioral health services, at a time when we know that there are not enough behavioral health providers overall.

One way licensed clinical professional counselors (LCPC) have adapted over the past year is by providing more services via telehealth. The importance of using technology to continue seeing clients when social distancing and stay at home orders went into effect cannot be overstated. Unfortunately, we know that using video format has not been available to everyone, for a variety of reasons. In instances where clients do not have a smartphone or computer, reliable internet, or sufficient privacy, professional counselors have been able to provide needed services via telephone to clients. This has ensured continuity of care throughout this crisis, and has allowed individuals seeking services for the first time, or returning to care, the ability to access services when they need it.

We know that the ability to provide behavioral health services via telehealth, including audio-only, will continue to be needed and a valuable tool in providing behavioral health services post-COVID.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony, and we urge a favorable vote. If we can provide any further information, please contact Rachael faulkner at rfaulkner@policypartners.net or 410-693-4000.