



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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House Bill HB0551-Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance – Coverage and Reimbursement of Telehealth Services
House Health and Government Operations Committee – 2/10/21
SUPPORT

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2021 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic Clubs in our County with hundreds of politically active women and men, including many elected officials. Affordable and accessible health care, including mental health care for all Marylanders is a primary focus for WDC.

WDC urges the passage of HB0551 because of its focus on supporting the use of telehealth for treatment of mental health and substance use disorders. There has been an increased need for those services during the pandemic. There has been a disproportionate use of telehealth for mental health services as compared to any other somatic condition. Limited access to mental health and substance use disorder providers in private carrier networks can be addressed in part by the continued use of telehealth even after the current health emergency is over.

This bill would:

- Require Medicaid to provide payment parity with in-person services and cover psychiatrists and psychiatric nurse practitioners who work in mobile ACT programs. It would also require private insurers to give patients a choice in selecting the delivery mode and obtain patient consent to use telehealth. It would further require all public and private insurers to be in compliance with the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act making mental health telehealth services comparable to services in other health conditions.
- Benefit working women in particular because telehealth provides appointment flexibility, saves travel time, and saves on transportation and childcare expenses. The use of telehealth is also important for those who have a physical disability making it difficult to get to in-person treatment. According to the Community Behavioral Health Association of Maryland's survey more than 70% of patients would continue using telehealth at least some of the time after the pandemic.

Telehealth has been shown to be, and will continue to be, essential for delivering mental health and substance use disorder treatment during and after the pandemic. Maryland laws need to be updated to reflect these new technological advances developed to address the changing environment and preferences of its residents.

We ask for your support for HB0551 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.

Respectfully,

Diana Conway
President