

MARYLAND PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY



April 30, 2020

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The Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cardin:

On behalf of the Maryland Psychiatric Society and its 725 members, I want to express support to remove barriers that Medicare patients encounter while trying to access essential treatment through telehealth. Federal efforts to facilitate access to care through audio visual telehealth have been instrumental throughout this pandemic.

However, we are concerned that many of our most vulnerable patients, especially those with serious mental illnesses and the elderly, still face obstacles because they lack the required video technology or live in areas without reliable broadband access. I encourage you to sign the Ernst/Kaine letter urging the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to allow Medicare to appropriately reimburse for audio-only telehealth visits. CMS allowing audio-only appointments will enable patients who do not know how to use video platforms, or do not have access to video-supported technology, to access vital mental health and substance use disorder care.

Currently, it is critical that Medicare patients can both socially distance and access high quality mental health care. We hope you will join Senators Ernst and Kaine by signing their letter encouraging CMS to make this vital change. To sign on to the letter, please contact Anna Breen in Senator Ernst's office at anna_breen@ernst.senate.gov or Katie Wright in Senator Kaine's office at katie_wright@kaine.senate.gov.

Thank you for your leadership during these difficult times.

Sincerely,

Marsden H. McGuire, M.D., M.B.A.
President