



May 4, 2021

Representative Perry
Representative Hymanson
Representative Tepler
Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial
State House
Augusta ME 04332

Re: LD323 An Act Regarding Insurance Coverage for Telehealth Services

Dear Representative Perry, Representative Hymanson, and Representative Tepler:

The Maine Psychological Association (MePA) is a membership organization representing psychologists in Maine who work in private practice, at Maine's colleges and universities, and in the public sector. Our mission is to advance psychology as a science, as a profession, and as a means of promoting health and human welfare.

MePA supports [An Act Regarding Insurance Coverage for Telehealth Services](#). This bill amends the law that requires health insurance carriers to cover telehealth services to provide that health care services provided through telephone communication are considered telehealth services, thus requiring a carrier to cover health care services provided through telephone communication regardless of whether or not other telehealth services are available. It also allows patients receiving MaineCare health services to provide verbal, electronic or written consent to telehealth and telemonitoring services.

Psychologists and their patients have concerns that as state and national public health emergency declarations end, the current public health emergency mandates will expire resulting in many insurers reverting back or terminating pandemic-related telehealth expansions.

Many patients in need of mental and behavioral health services have conditions and disorders that prevent them from safely (or without great anxiety) leaving their homes and sharing close personal space with other people. This will be especially burdensome on moderate- and low-income subscribers who have no choice but to take public transportation or rely on others to get to their in-person health care appointments.

Allowing coverage and reimbursement of audio-only telephone services addresses the inequity problem that lower SES and older patients tend to have less access to the resources and skills required for telehealth via traditional video-conferencing platforms (access to laptops and smartphones, broadband services, and the skills to use videoconferencing systems) and older patients often have transportation issues that are barriers to accessing in-person services.

Telehealth boosts patient access, which will help Maine meet the increased mental health needs resulting from the pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas Cooper', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Thomas Cooper, PsyD
President