



May 4, 2021

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

Re: LD333 An Act Regarding Telehealth

Dear Representative Hymanson and Committee Members:

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 LD 333. This bill changes health insurance coverage to allow for the provision of services through telephone (audio-only) means when there are no other connection options. This will expand telehealth options and will improve access to mental health and other services for consumers in areas with limited broadband.

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