

BILL: Senate Bill 278
TITLE: State Department of Education and Maryland Department of Health -
Maryland School-Based Health Center Standards - Telehealth
DATE: January 20, 2021
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's local boards of education, supports Senate Bill 278.

MABE supports this legislation in order to remove any bureaucratic barriers to the ability of school-based health centers to provide health care services through telehealth. Specifically, this bill is needed to ensure that a school-based health center already approved by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) need not satisfy additional requirements before providing telehealth services.

There are approximately 84 school-based health centers located in 12 Maryland jurisdictions. These centers offer comprehensive preventive and primary health services which may include behavioral health, oral health, and other health support services. School closures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic have challenged the operation of school-based health centers and heightened the need to provide student health services through telehealth.

According to the 2019 report on "School-Based Telehealth" by the Maryland Health Care Commission:

"Use of school-based telehealth can improve health quality and academic performance by expanding access to primary and acute care, chronic disease management, behavioral health, and therapy services. Telehealth has been found to help treat complex conditions and keep chronically ill children in school. Schools using telehealth have demonstrated its value in decreasing absenteeism and relieving stress for parents/guardians who no longer have to leave work to take their child to a medical appointment or an urgent care center. Growing evidence supports opportunities for telehealth to avert emergency room visits and reduce health care costs."

Again, MABE supports the passage of Senate Bill 278 to facilitate the operation of school-based health centers using telehealth to meet the needs of students and families throughout the State.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 278.