MEDCHI APPLAUDS GOVERNOR HOGAN'S RECENT ACTION EXPANDING TELEHEALTH SERVICES IN MARYLAND

MedChi CTO Partners with DrFirst to Provide Backline with Telehealth for its Physician Practices

ANNAPOLIS, April 2, 2020 – MedChi CEO Gene Ransom applauds Governor Hogan's decisive action this week to clarify telehealth delivery services in Maryland. "Governor Hogan's executive order on April 1, 2020, and his signature of two emergency telehealth measures planned for April 3, clarifies what Maryland physicians can do with telehealth and will help fight the deadly coronavirus crisis," Ransom said today.

MedChi supported the first bill, Maryland Senate Bill 502, which requires Medicaid to provide mental health services appropriately delivered through telehealth to a patient in the patient's home setting. The bill also expands the definition of "telehealth" for purposes of private insurance coverage to include the delivery of mental health care services to a patient in the patient's home.

MedChi's concerns about the second bill, Maryland Senate Bill 402, as it was originally written were resolved by the General Assembly's artfully drafted amendments that protect patients and clarify the role of in-person visits. "MedChi is very pleased the Governor is taking this action and signing the two bills today, and we appreciate the additional clarity of his recent Executive Order," said Ransom.

MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, is urging the State of Maryland to provide physician practices with telehealth technology to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. MedChi has been a leader on coronavirus, educating and working with Maryland physicians, and keeping people up to date with their Coronavirus Resource page.

"Our physician members have raised two major concerns about the pandemic," said Gene Ransom, MedChi CEO. "They are concerned about the lack of adequate testing and about preventing health worker exposure to the virus." The state recently announced that two major lab companies will be able to perform tests, which Ransom expects to help resolve physicians' concern about testing. "But the risk of exposure for healthcare workers continues to be a major concern," he adds.

Because of the important role of social distancing to help prevent the spread of coronavirus, Congress, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and private insurance companies are supporting the expanded use of telehealth for patient care. Telehealth can allow patients to receive treatment without risking healthcare worker exposure to coronavirus, as well as protect other patients in the hospital or doctor's office. As a result of the outbreak, the MedChi Care Transformation Organization (MedChi CTO) provided its physician practices with telehealth capability, through DrFirst's Backline care collaboration platform.

Backline allows physicians to conduct telehealth sessions without requiring patients to download an app or complete a cumbersome registration process. Because Backline is a full care-collaboration platform that meets HIPAA requirements to protect patients' health information, it supports team-based care that goes beyond a single encounter, which is especially the case when treating patients with complex acute and chronic conditions.

Backline is designed for every healthcare setting, from large hospitals to small physician practices and can be implemented quickly by facilities of any size and any number of users. This allows Backline to create a hospital or doctor's office "without walls," enabling healthcare providers to extend their care to satellite settings or to triage patients, while protecting healthcare workers and other patients from potential exposure to coronavirus. It also allows healthcare providers to work remotely if they are quarantined but well enough to work.

"MedChi endorses the use of telehealth and secure messaging to help Maryland physicians assess and treat patients through virtual visits to reduce exposure to the coronavirus. We chose the Backline product in our CTO for continuity of care and to reduce the risk of exposure," said Ransom. "We urge the State of Maryland to help healthcare workers have access to this urgently needed service to all of the physician practices in the state." Ransom notes that Backline also supports the Maryland Primary Care Program (MDPCP) and CTOs by allowing clinicians to provide 24/7 access for patients and their care teams for urgent, emergency, and chronic care."

MedChi and DrFirst currently collaborate in additional ways to help physician practices as they care for their patients. DrFirst's iPrescribe is the first mobile e-prescribing app to allow Maryland clinicians to access the state's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) data to help control the opioid crisis, through a partnership with MedChi and CRISP, the state's Health Information Exchange that operates the PDMP. In addition, the State of Maryland recently awarded DrFirst a grant to equip paramedics in two counties with Backline EMS so they can have real-time access to patients' medication histories and a secure way to text hospitals with patient information.

"Telehealth is proving itself as a critical defense against the COVID-19 pandemic," said G. Cameron Deemer, president of DrFirst. "We stand ready to work with MedChi, physician practices, and hospitals in Maryland to help protect patients and healthcare providers from exposure."

View a Backline telehealth demo here.

About MedChi
MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, is a non-profit membership association of Maryland physicians. It is the largest physician organization in Maryland. The mission of MedChi is to serve as Maryland's foremost advocate and resource for physicians, their patients and the public health of Maryland. For more information, please visit www.medchi.org.

About DrFirst
Since 2000, DrFirst has pioneered healthcare technology solutions and consulting services that securely connect people at touchpoints of care to improve patient outcomes. We create unconventional solutions that solve care collaboration, medication management, price transparency and adherence challenges faced in healthcare. We unite the Healthiverse by providing our clients with real-time access to the information they need, exactly when and how they need it – so patients get the best care possible. DrFirst solutions are used by nearly 300,000 healthcare professionals, including more than 100,000 prescribers, and more than 1,400 hospitals in the U.S. and Canada. To learn more, visit DrFirst.com.