ENHANCE OLDER ADULT ACCESS TO TELEHEALTH SERVICES
MODERNIZE MEDICARE POLICY TO IMPROVE BENEFICIARY ACCESS & OUTCOMES

ACTION REQUESTED

Cosponsor the Creating Opportunities Now for Necessary and Effective Care Technologies (CONNECT) for Health Act of 2019 (H.R. 4932/S. 2741).

ISSUE: Medicare Does Not Cover Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Services Delivered Via Telehealth.

- Audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are qualified providers of telehealth services. They are licensed in states, reimbursed by private payers, and authorized by various state Medicaid plans to provide services in this manner.
- Covering telehealth would enhance access to hearing, swallowing, and cognition related health care services to Medicare beneficiaries in rural and medically under-served areas.¹
- Increasing access to audiology and speech-language pathology services may help consumers to better understand their health care condition and help their ability to express their medical need resulting in increased compliance and improved patient outcomes.²
- Twenty states have licensure laws that authorize audiologists and SLPs to perform services via telehealth; no states have enacted prohibitions on telehealth.
- Expanding telehealth coverage to these professions would have a minor effect on Medicare spending. An independent cost estimate found that covering audiology and speech-language pathology services under Medicare would increase fiscal year outlays by less than $2.5 million over the 5-year budget period and less than $10 million over 10 years.
- The use of telehealth should be based on the unique clinical presentation of the patient and the ability of the clinician to ensure that the quality of services provided via telehealth matches the quality of services provided in person.
- Demand for audiology services is projected to increase by 21% by 2026 while demand for speech-language pathology services is projected to increase by 18% during that period.³

SOLUTION: Cosponsor the CONNECT for Health Act of 2019 (H.R. 4932/S. 2741).

- The bill would expand the use of telehealth though the waiver of certain requirements, such as restrictions on the use of telehealth by audiologists, SLPs, and other therapy professions.
- It could also allow additional health professionals such as audiologists and SLPs to furnish telehealth services by enabling the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to test models that allow them to do so.