

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

October 9, 2020

The Honorable Seema Verma  
Administrator  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Administrator Verma:

We are writing to share our support for allowing additional audiology and speech-language pathology services that are already covered under Medicare to be available to beneficiaries via telehealth for the duration of the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) public health emergency (PHE).


We appreciate that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has provided new authority and flexibility for Medicare beneficiaries to receive essential health care services via telehealth by utilizing Section 3703 of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (Public Law 116-136), including enabling audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) to provide Medicare Part B telehealth services during the PHE. Unfortunately, the current list of approved telehealth services does not adequately ensure Medicare beneficiaries have access to the range of clinically appropriate hearing, speech, language, cognition, and swallowing services they require.

There are a number of audiology and speech-language pathology services that can be provided under Medicare in-person that can also be provided remotely in a safe and effective manner. We recommend adding to the telehealth services list audiology codes representing core diagnostic tests for identifying the type, severity, and etiology of hearing loss or the need for further vestibular testing. We also recommend adding to the telehealth services list speech-language pathology codes representing evaluation and treatment of a broader range of speech, language, cognitive, and swallowing disorders, as well as those that relate to evaluating and treating individuals who need speech-generating devices.

At a time when individuals with hearing, communication, and swallowing disorders face even higher risk for isolation and depression, Medicare beneficiaries must have access to appropriate diagnostic and therapeutic services via telehealth to slow transmission of COVID-19 and ensure they receive medically necessary treatment to meet their functional goals. We understand that CMS can issue sub-regulatory guidance to provide better access to telehealth services for Medicare beneficiaries who need the services of audiologists and SLPs. We strongly encourage you to issue such guidance to add further audiology and speech-language pathology codes to the authorized telehealth services list for its duration as soon as possible.

Again, thank you for your significant efforts to expand telehealth options for Medicare beneficiaries during the PHE. We look forward to the addition of all clinically appropriate audiology and speech-language pathology services to the telehealth services list as soon as possible to build on those efforts.

Sincerely,

  
Cindy Axne  
Member of Congress

  
Brian Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress

### Other Signatories

Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress

John B. Larson  
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress

William R. Timmons, IV  
Member of Congress

Vicente Gonzalez  
Member of Congress

Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress

Jerry McNerney  
Member of Congress

Abby Finkenauer  
Member of Congress

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

Joseph D. Morelle  
Member of Congress

Troy Balderson  
Member of Congress

Rodney Davis  
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress

Angie Craig  
Member of Congress

Tom O'Halleran  
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress

David B. McKinley P.E.  
Member of Congress

Katie Porter  
Member of Congress

Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress

Tom Rice  
Member of Congress

Lauren Underwood  
Member of Congress

Andy Kim  
Member of Congress

Lisa Blunt Rochester  
Member of Congress

Jeff Van Drew  
Member of Congress

Xochitl Torres Small  
Member of Congress

Gus M. Bilirakis  
Member of Congress

Harley Rouda  
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress