

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Colleague:

Please join us in cosponsoring H.R. 7663, legislation expanding and extending access to critical telehealth services for Medicare beneficiaries.

As you know, beginning in March, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) significantly expanded access to telehealth services for Medicare beneficiaries. This expansion, which was authorized by bipartisan legislation of ours included in initial COVID-19 response legislation, will conclude at the expiration of the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency.

Telehealth and telemedicine have seen an unprecedented boom over the past six months, and for good reason: by allowing and encouraging patients to visit their health care providers remotely, we can minimize transmission risk and promote both patient and provider safety. This is especially important for the Medicare population, given the vulnerability of older individuals to COVID-19, and offers particular benefit to rural or underserved communities, for whom seeking needed care can be burdensome even under normal circumstances. As a result, health care systems and providers nationwide – including Medicare itself – have consistently reported a massive increase in telehealth utilization.

While the benefits of telehealth are particularly evident amidst a pandemic, its value is not limited to the present circumstances. We have seen repeatedly that telehealth can increase access to care for patients in rural or underserved communities, ensuring that patients can receive the care they need, while generating significant cost savings to our health care system overall.

That is why we, as Co-Chairs of the bipartisan House Telehealth Caucus, have introduced H.R. 7663, the *Protecting Access to Post-COVID-19 Telehealth Act*. This legislation encompasses a range of telehealth proposals which, taken together, would make permanent much of the recent expansion of telehealth in Medicare while ensuring that access to telehealth does not abruptly cease at the conclusion of the current public health emergency.

H.R. 7663 would:

- Permanently eliminate geographic requirements for originating sites, beginning on December 31, 2020. This would enable Medicare beneficiaries to access telehealth services even if the patient is not located in a federally-designated rural area.
- Permanently enable Medicare beneficiaries to receive telehealth services at home.
- Make permanent the Section 1135 waiver authority, enabling the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) to expand telehealth in Medicare during disasters and public

health emergencies. (At present, this authority was only applicable to the COVID-19 emergency specifically.)

- Permanently designate federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) and rural health clinics (RHCs) as eligible distant site providers, allowing them to provide telehealth services to Medicare beneficiaries and receive CMS reimbursement.
- Extend existing telehealth flexibilities for 90 days beyond the end of the current public health emergency. This is meant to ensure that seniors do not face an abrupt end of access to telehealth services at the conclusion of the PHE, and to ensure that both patients and providers can adequately prepare for the conclusion of those services.
- Require HHS to report to Congress on the utilization of telehealth services in Medicare during COVID-19, including uptake rates, patient outcomes, racial and ethnic disparities, barriers to access, and cost to the government.

We have been pleased to see so many of our colleagues in the House and Senate, along with numerous Administration officials, recognize the importance of telehealth during this pandemic. This legislation has been endorsed by over 200 leading health care organizations, a full list of which may be found [here](#).

We would greatly appreciate your support as a cosponsor of this vital legislation. Should you have any questions, please contact Crozer Connor with Rep. Thompson at crozer.connor@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress

BILL JOHNSON
Member of Congress

PETER WELCH
Member of Congress

DAVID SCHWEIKERT
Member of Congress