



Federal Telehealth Legislative Update

May 12, 2021

CONNECT for Health Act Re-Introduced

Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI), Roger Wicker (R-MS), Ben Cardin (D-MD), John Thune (R-SD), Mark Warner (D-VA) & Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS) introduced S. 1512, the CONNECT for Health Act. Last year's version of this bill was the foundation for the telehealth waivers in the CARES Act passed last March. Click [here](#) for the bill, [here](#) for the summary and [here](#) for the press release. H.R. 2903 is the House companion bill, introduced by Rep. Schweikert (R-AZ), Peter Welch (D-VT), Bill Johnson (R-OH) and Mike Thompson (D-CA).

Numerous bills have been introduced in this Congress - click [here](#) to review the Medicare/Medicaid telehealth bills. The CONNECT Act is the most comprehensive and with 50 cosponsors in the Senate has the most bi-partisan support. We expect at least some of the provisions of the CONNECT Act to be included in legislation ultimately considered by Congress later this year.

In part, the CONNECT for Health Act:

- Gives the HHS Secretary the authority to waive telehealth restrictions, such as limits on the type of technology used, limits on the types of practitioners eligible to provide services via telehealth in Medicare, types of services covered or other limitations.
- Permanently removes geographic restrictions.
- Permanently expands originating sites to home and other sites.
- Permanently allows FQHCs/RHCs to serve as distant sites.
- Revises process for adding telehealth services under Medicare and allows the Secretary to add services on a temporary basis.
- Includes funds for increased OIG audits.
- Requires the Secretary to collect and analyze data for telehealth and communication technology-based services and report to Congress.
- Requires an analysis of telehealth waivers in APMs, the development of a model to allow additional health professionals to furnish services via telehealth and the testing of models to examine the use of telehealth in Medicare.

Rep. Doggett (D-TX), the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee, plans to introduce legislation that would extend the existing telehealth waivers post PHE to allow for

additional study on the impact on health care delivery, Medicare spending and utilization and quality of care. Other bills are likely to be introduced.

There have been some Congressional hearings addressing telehealth, but the committees have not yet scheduled a mark-up or consideration of any of the bills. We continue to talk with staff about the process moving forward.

Recap of Congressional Hearings:

The House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee held a hearing on April 28. Click [here](#) to read Chairman Doggett's statement and [here](#) to watch the hearing. The House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee hearing on March 2 may be viewed [here](#). Telehealth was also raised in the Senate HELP Committee hearing on mental health and substance use disorders on April 28. Click [here](#) to view. The Senate Finance Committee is holding a hearing on May 12 on improving mental health and addiction services which may touch on telehealth. Click [here](#) to view.

For additional information, please contact our General Counsel Diane Turpin at diane.turpin@shcare.net or 202-578-5444