

Ask Congress to Allow Occupational Therapy via Telehealth for Medicare Beneficiaries on a permanent basis *Expanded Telehealth Access Act—H.R.3875/S.2880* ***Discussion Outline***

- Occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) were permitted by Congress and CMS to provide services via telehealth to Medicare beneficiaries during the public health emergency (PHE), and this waiver was extended through December 2024. CMS does NOT have the authority to establish OTPs as permanent telehealth providers or extend this waiver, so **OT via telehealth will end for Medicare beneficiaries unless Congress acts before the end of December 2024.**
- The PHE and extended waiver period have served as a laboratory for the use of telehealth to provide OT services. It has been **especially helpful for people in rural and other underserved areas** and to those for whom travel to receive services was already a barrier to access, including people with disabilities.
- **Telehealth “home tours” are a specific OT telehealth benefit that cannot be duplicated in a facility/office setting.** Occupational therapy practitioners report that telehealth has enabled in-home “video tours” to identify home safety issues that would never be identified by the patient in a facility/office setting. This can be crucial in preventing falls, addressing functional decline, and avoiding costly emergency room visits and hospital admissions which can reduce the cost of care.
- Occupational therapy practitioners report that **telehealth has enabled Medicare beneficiaries to reduce delays to care** with courses of therapy starting sooner, fewer cancellations and postponements, and treatment sometimes being completed with fewer visits, which can reduce the cost of care.
- The Expanded Telehealth Access was introduced by Representatives Mikie Sherrill (NJ) and Diana Harshbarger (TN) as H.R.3875 and Senators Steve Daines (MT) and Tina Smith (MN) as S.2880. **This bill would enable Medicare beneficiaries to continue to receive OT services via telehealth by establishing OTPs as permanent telehealth providers.** The bill is supported by other therapy groups and telehealth advocates.

Your Ask:

Please co-sponsor the Expanded Telehealth Access Act in both the House (H.R.3875) and Senate (S.2880)