



May 16, 2024

The Honorable Brett Guthrie  
Chair  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Health  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Anna Eshoo  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Health  
2322A Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Guthrie and Ranking Member Eshoo:

I am writing to share the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's (ASHA) strong support for ensuring that audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) can continue providing telehealth services to Medicare beneficiaries beyond December 31, 2024.

ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 234,000 members, certificate holders, and affiliates who are audiologists; SLPs; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology assistants; and students. Audiologists specialize in preventing and assessing hearing and balance disorders as well as providing audiologic treatment, including hearing aids. SLPs identify, assess, and treat speech, language, swallowing, and cognitive communication disorders.

ASHA supports several bills that would ensure audiologists and SLPs are able to continue providing Medicare telehealth services on a permanent basis. These bills include H.R. 7623, the Telehealth Modernization Act of 2024; H.R. 3875, the Expanded Telehealth Access Act; and H.R. 8151, the Telehealth Practitioners Act. ASHA appreciates the committee's inclusion of H.R. 7623 in today's markup—and supports a two-year extension of Medicare telehealth authority proposed by the amendment in the nature of a substitute rather than expiration of such flexibility—but believes audiologists and SLPs should be permanent Medicare telehealth providers. We particularly appreciate Representative Harshbarger's leadership in building bipartisan support for a permanent telehealth policy for audiologists, SLPs, and other nonphysician providers through the introduction of H.R. 3875, which has 55 bipartisan cosponsors—including five members of the Energy and Commerce Committee.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has used authority provided by Congress to cover key audiology and speech-language pathology telehealth services. However, Secretary Becerra has repeatedly implored Congress to provide the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) guidance through statute to enshrine such temporary flexibilities more concretely. Failing to do so could jeopardize continuity of care if the Department misinterprets congressional intent or modifies current coverage of these services for other reasons.

Data from ASHA's National Outcomes Measurement System has shown that patients receiving services via telehealth improved their conditions at comparable rates to patients who received services in person.<sup>1</sup> This data also indicated that telehealth helped patients save money by decreasing lost wages to themselves or their caregivers from missing work and reducing transportation costs traveling to and from appointments.<sup>2</sup> Further, the HHS inspector general also found that only 0.2% of Medicare claims for telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic were at high risk of being fraudulent.<sup>3</sup> Making this authority permanent for audiologists and

SLPs beyond the current December 31, 2024 deadline will ensure Medicare beneficiaries have continued access to critical and cost-effective services that improve their health and quality of life.

ASHA urges the Subcommittee to favorably report legislation that ensures audiologists and SLPs can continue providing telehealth services to Medicare beneficiaries beyond the current expiration of this authority on December 31, 2024, for the longest possible period. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Josh Krantz, ASHA's director of federal affairs, health care, at [jkrantz@asha.org](mailto:jkrantz@asha.org).

Sincerely,



Tena L. McNamara, AuD, CCC-A/SLP  
2024 ASHA President

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<sup>1</sup> Warren, S. (2022). *New Outcomes Data Support Making Telehealth Policies Permanent*. LeaderLive. <https://leader.pubs.asha.org/do/10.1044/leader.PA.27072022.telehealth-data.16/full/>

<sup>2</sup> American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. *Telehealth Improves Patient Access to Care*. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/advocacy/telepractice-data-fact-sheet.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General. (2022). *Medicare Telehealth Services During the First Year of the Pandemic: Program Integrity Risks*. <https://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/OEI-02-20-00720.pdf>