



November 28, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leaders Schumer and McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy:

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) write to share our support for a two-year extension permitting audiologists, occupational therapists (OTs), physical therapists (PTs), speech-language pathologists (SLPs), occupational therapy assistants (OTAs), and physical therapy assistants (PTAs) to provide services through telehealth under Medicare.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

We appreciate the short-term extension of the Medicare telehealth authority enacted as part of H.R. 2471, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 (Public Law 117-103), allowing audiologists, OTs, PTs, SLPs, OTAs, and PTAs to continue providing telehealth services once the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) expires. With the immediate threat of a telehealth “cliff” averted, we urge Congress to pass a two-year extension of this authority to ensure continued beneficiary access to the treatment and services our members provide while Congress considers permanent changes to Medicare telehealth coverage. This would allow sufficient time to collect and analyze key data on telehealth utilization, costs, quality, outcomes, and patient satisfaction that would help inform deliberations about such changes.

Throughout the PHE, our members have demonstrated that their services can be provided in a clinically appropriate manner and achieve treatment outcomes and patient satisfaction at the same levels as in-person care. Providing services to Medicare beneficiaries through telehealth increases access to care, especially for beneficiaries in rural and medically underserved areas. In addition, telehealth services are shown to increase continuity of care, help overcome provider shortages, and reduce patient travel burden.<sup>4</sup>

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services used the authority Congress provided pursuant to Section 3703 of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (P.L. 116-136) to enable our members to provide a wide range of services through telehealth that could only be offered in person prior to the COVID-19 PHE. These critical telehealth services should be available to Medicare beneficiaries beyond the temporary period authorized by H.R. 2471.

We also appreciate that the House has passed H.R. 4040, the Advancing Telehealth Beyond COVID-19 Act of 2022, which includes a provision (Section 3) that ensures audiologists, OTs, PTs, SLPs, OTAs, and PTAs are specifically able to continue providing services through

telehealth for two years following the end of the PHE and 151-day extension enacted as part of H.R. 2471. We urge the Senate to pass this bill or include an identical provision in legislation enacted before the end of the year.

AOTA, APTA, and ASHA also urge Congress to pass the Expanded Telehealth Access Act (H.R. 2168/S. 3193), bipartisan legislation that would permanently add audiologists, OTs, PTs, SLPs, OTAs, and PTAs to the list of eligible Medicare telehealth providers. While we understand and appreciate the desire to provide a shorter-term extension of authority before developing permanent telehealth polices, our members should be able to continue to provide services in this manner under any future guidelines and requirements Congress may prescribe regarding telehealth more broadly.

Thank you for permitting these practitioners to provide telehealth services temporarily beyond the PHE. We look forward to working with you and the committees of jurisdiction to ensure America's seniors continue to have timely and robust access to the critical services our members provide, including through telehealth, so that they can maintain the highest possible level of function and lead happy, healthy, and productive lives.

Sincerely,

Wendy C. Hildenbrand, PhD, MPH, OTR/L, FAOTA  
President, American Occupational Therapy Association

Roger Herr, PT, MPA  
President, American Physical Therapy Association



Judy Rich, EdD, CCC-SLP, BCS-CL  
2022 President, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

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<sup>1</sup> American Occupational Therapy Association. (n.d.). About AOTA. <https://www.aota.org/about>.

<sup>2</sup> American Physical Therapy Association. (n.d.). About APTA. <https://www.apta.org/apta-and-you/about-us>.

<sup>3</sup> American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). About the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). <https://www.asha.org/about/>.

<sup>4</sup> Department of Health and Human Services (2021). *Telehealth for Providers: What You Need to Know*. <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/telehealth-toolkit-providers.pdf>.