



June 17, 2020

The Honorable Cindy Axne  
330 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Troy Balderson  
1221 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Axne and Balderson:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write in support of the KEEP Telehealth Options Act.

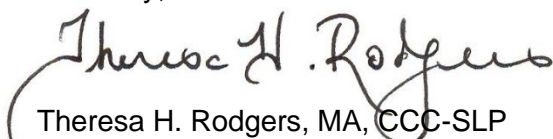
The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 211,000 individuals who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Audiologists specialize in preventing and assessing hearing and balance disorders as well as providing audiologic treatment, including hearing aids. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) identify, assess, and treat speech and language problems, including swallowing disorders.

ASHA appreciates your leadership to expand access to medically necessary services for Medicare beneficiaries through telehealth. The Emergency COVID Telehealth Response Act that you introduced, which required coverage of telehealth services provided by audiologists and SLPs, played an important role in convincing the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to remove arbitrary and unnecessary restrictions preventing these and other health care professionals from providing telehealth services to Medicare beneficiaries. ASHA is pleased that the Secretary has now exercised authority consistent with congressional intent provided in your legislation. However, as you know, this authority currently extends only through the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) public health emergency (PHE) period.

The KEEP Telehealth Options Act recognizes the importance of collecting and reporting key data that will demonstrate the efficacy and cost effectiveness of enabling licensed health care professionals, such as audiologists and SLPs, to provide essential services in this manner permanently. This legislation helps build the foundation for extending this authority beyond the PHE and ensure that seniors continue to have access to important hearing, balance, speech, language, swallowing, and cognitive care in a manner that promotes the safety of both patients and providers. ASHA looks forward to working with you to ensure passage of the KEEP Telehealth Options Act by the House and its enactment into law.

Thank you again for your leadership. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Jerry White, ASHA's director of federal affairs for health care, at [jwhite@asha.org](mailto:jwhite@asha.org).

Sincerely,



Theresa H. Rodgers, MA, CCC-SLP  
2020 ASHA President