

AMA 2020 MEDICAL STUDENT ADVOCACY AND REGION CONFERENCE

ISSUE BRIEF: TELEMEDICINE

Bipartisan telemedicine legislation: "CONNECT for Health Act"

The "Creating Opportunities Now for Necessary and Effective Care Technologies (CONNECT) for Health Act" (S. 2741/H.R. 4932), introduced by Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI) and Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA), would benefit Medicare beneficiaries by removing antiquated restrictions in the Medicare program that prevent physicians from using widely available medical technology that has become commonplace in the past decade.

While the medical profession, other federal health programs, state Medicaid programs and private health plans have been vigorously embracing telehealth services and technologies, Medicare coverage is restricted by law to services provided to patients who travel to certain clinical sites in rural areas. As a result, currently less than 1% of Medicare beneficiaries use telehealth services. It is long overdue that these outdated artificial barriers be removed, and that the Medicare program, beneficiaries and providers be allowed to take full advantage of innovative new telehealth services.

The "CONNECT for Health Act" would expand access to telehealth by providing the secretary of health and human services the authority to waive restrictions on payment for telehealth services, in addition to immediately authorizing Medicare to cover the use of telehealth for mental health, emergency medical services, rural health clinics and federally authorized health centers, Native American health centers, and during national emergencies, and for recertifying hospice care.

Ask your senators and representative to make modern telehealth services available to Medicare beneficiaries and physicians. Cosponsor S. 2741/H.R. 4932, the "CONNECT for Health Act."