



ASHA
American
Speech-Language-Hearing
Association

June 17, 2022

The Honorable Adrian Smith
502 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom O'Halleran
318 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kelly Armstrong
1740 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Smith, O'Halleran, and Armstrong:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write to express support for the H.R. 7876, the Connecting Rural Telehealth to the Future Act.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 223,000 individuals who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students.

ASHA supports congressional action to ensure Medicare beneficiaries have continued access to necessary hearing, balance, speech, language, swallowing, and cognitive care provided through telehealth beyond the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE). The Connecting Rural Telehealth to the Future Act will provide a much-needed short-term solution for ensuring that patients, especially those in rural and medically underserved areas, retain robust access to telehealth services provided by audiologists and SLPs.

Throughout the PHE, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has used authority provided by Congress to cover key audiology and speech-language pathology services delivered through telehealth. However, that authority expires once the COVID-19 PHE ends. Extending this authority through December 31, 2024, as called for under Section 4 of H.R. 7876, will ensure continuity of care for beneficiaries while Congress considers more permanent telehealth changes. ASHA also supports the Expanded Telehealth Access Act (H.R. 2168/S. 3193), which would provide a longer-term solution by providing permanent telehealth authority for audiologists and SLPs under Medicare.

ASHA applauds your leadership and appreciates your support for extending current telehealth waivers beyond the COVID-19 PHE. ASHA looks forward to working with you to pass this legislation through the U.S. House of Representatives.

If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Josh Krantz, ASHA's director of federal affairs for health care, at jkrantz@asha.org.

Sincerely,

Judy Rich, EdD, CCC-SLP, BCS-CL
2022 ASHA President