



ASHA
American
Speech-Language-Hearing
Association

December 1, 2021

The Honorable Lloyd Doggett
Chair, Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Health
2307 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Devin Nunes
Ranking Member, Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Health
1013 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Doggett and Ranking Member Nunes:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write to express support for the Telehealth Extension Act of 2021.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 218,000 individuals who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students.

It is critical for audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) to be able to provide medically necessary services and treatment safely and effectively. The Telehealth Extension Act of 2021 will provide a much-needed short-term solution for ensuring that Medicare beneficiaries have continued access to necessary hearing, balance, speech, language, swallowing, and cognitive care provided through telehealth, which will help maintain access to these services, especially in rural and medically underserved areas.

Throughout the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) public health emergency (PHE), the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has used its 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 for two years after the PHE expires, as called for under Section 7 of the Telehealth Extension Act of 2021, 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 of the Ways and Means Committee's Subcommittee on Health 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,

A. Lynn Williams, PhD, CCC-SLP
2021 ASHA President