

Telehealth Bill CONNECT Act for Health Introduced in Congress

Alliance Daily | Apr. 10, 2025

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Current Flexibilities Set To Expire September 30 Without Congressional Action
- CONNECT Act is bipartisan and popular
- Would remove all geographic restrictions on telehealth services
- Allow more eligible health care pros to use telehealth services;
- A lot more

A large bipartisan group of Senators has re-introduced the CONNECT (Creating Opportunities Now for Necessary and Effective Care Technologies) for Health Act, which would expand coverage of telehealth services through Medicare, make COVID-19 telehealth flexibilities permanent, improve health outcomes, and make it easier for patients to connect with their doctors. Current flexibilities are set to expire on September 30 unless Congress extends them.

A bipartisan group of 60 senators has co-sponsored the new iteration of the legislation, led by Senators Brian Schatz (D-HI), Roger Wicker (R-MS), Mark Warner (D-VA), Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS), John Barrasso (R-WY), and Peter Welch (D-VT).

The CONNECT for Health Act would:

- Permanently remove all geographic restrictions on telehealth services and expand originating sites to the location of the patient, including homes;
- Permanently allow health centers and rural health clinics to provide telehealth services;
- Allow more eligible health care professionals to utilize telehealth services;
- Remove unnecessary in-person visit requirement for telemental health services;
- Allow for the waiver of telehealth restrictions during public health emergencies; and
- Require more published data to learn more about how telehealth is being used, impacts of quality of care, and how it can be improved to support patients and health care providers.

“While telehealth use has rapidly increased in recent years, our laws have not kept up,” said Senator Schatz. “Telehealth is helping people get the care they need, and it’s here

to stay. Our comprehensive bill makes it easier for more people to see their doctors no matter where they live.”

“We live in a digital world, and our health services should reflect that. In the past decade, telehealth has made medical care more accessible for patients across the state and country,” said Senator Wicker. “It is time to make telehealth coverage permanent for Medicare recipients so that more Americans, especially those in rural Mississippi, have access to health care.”

“Telehealth services have proven to be a safe and effective form of medical care. Through the expansion of telehealth services in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, more patients have received quality, affordable care. I’m glad to introduce legislation that will make permanent some of these services and ensure Virginians continue to access affordable health care when they need it, and where they need it,” said Senator Warner.

“Even before the pandemic, Mississippi recognized the vital role of telehealth. Across America, rural communities, the elderly, and those with mobility challenges have long struggled to access traditional healthcare,” said Senator Hyde-Smith. “This legislation is essential to delivering affordable, accessible, and quality care that Americans deserve, and I’m proud to continue this years-long effort to expand telehealth services.”

“The COVID-19 pandemic proved that telehealth not only works, but is essential,” said Senator Welch. “Rural and underserved areas in Vermont and across the country desperately need solutions to address the widening gap in health care access, and increasing telehealth services must be part of the answer. This bipartisan bill takes commonsense steps to help bridge that gap and make sure that our policies adapt to the capabilities of our technology.”

“Telehealth is a critical for rural states like Wyoming,” said Senator Barrasso. “It has given folks access to specialized care no matter where they live. This important bipartisan bill will make it easier for Medicare patients, especially those in remote areas, to continue to have access to the health care they need.”