

February 2, 2016

Senator Brian Schatz
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schatz,

On behalf of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), I wish to extend our support for the CONNECT for Health Act.

AOTA is the national professional association representing the interests of more than 185,000 occupational therapists, students of occupational therapy, and occupational therapy assistants. The practice of occupational therapy is science-driven, evidence-based, and enables people of all ages to live life to its fullest by promoting health and minimizing the functional effects of illness, injury, and disability.

Occupational therapy practitioners use telehealth as a service delivery model to help clients develop skills; incorporate assistive technology and adaptive techniques; modify work, home, or school environments; and create health-promoting habits and routines. Occupational therapy is the chief profession with expertise in living and community environments which may be better observed and evaluated through telehealth means.

Benefits of a telehealth service delivery model include increased accessibility of services to clients who live in remote or underserved areas, improved access to providers and specialists otherwise unavailable to clients, prevention of unnecessary delays in receiving care, and workforce enhancement through consultation and research among others.

AOTA applauds your efforts to increase access to needed care by expanding coverage in Medicare for telehealth services. The CONNECT for Health Act's waiver of restrictions on the use of telehealth and remote patient monitoring in the bridge program, alternative payment models, and Medicare Advantage, along with requirements on quality and data measures, will demonstrate that telehealth services to Medicare beneficiaries can be provided efficiently and effectively, while maintaining the same ethical and professional standards that apply to the traditional delivery of services.

There is a growing base of evidence demonstrating the efficacy of technologically mediated occupational therapy. Occupational therapy via telehealth has already demonstrated great value and quality to federal government payer systems. Both the U.S. Department of Defense and Veteran's Health Administration permit and encourage occupational therapy via telehealth. We believe the passage of the CONNECT for Health Act would bring similar value to the Medicare program, helping to improve the overall levels of function, participation, and wellness amongst an otherwise underserved senior population.

AOTA and its 185,000 occupational therapy practitioners, educators, students and researchers around the nation strongly support the CONNECT for Health ACT and look forward working with you closely to advance this legislation. Please contact me at HParsons@aota.org if I can be of future assistance.

Sincerely,



Heather Parsons
Director of Legislative Advocacy