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House Overwhelmingly Passes Bill to Extend Medicare Telehealth Flexibilities for Additional Two Years

On July 27, the U.S. House of Representatives [voted](#) 416 to 12 to pass [legislation](#) to extend key Medicare telehealth flexibilities made possible by the public health emergency (PHE) for an additional two years until Dec. 31, 2024.

Prior to the PHE being instated for COVID-19, Medicare was severely limited in what it covered for telehealth services. Due to its stringent geographic and site restrictions, Medicare would only reimburse for telehealth furnished in a health care facility, and even then, only when located in a rural, health professional shortage area. By waiving these geographic and site restrictions, Medicare was able to offer telehealth into a patient's home, among other locations.

The legislation passed by the House would extend for two years the current waiver on geographic and site restrictions. It would also extend for two years additional telehealth flexibilities made possible by the PHE, including:

- Allowing audio-only coverage
- Allowing the ability of federally qualified health centers and rural health clinics to serve as telehealth distant sites
- Expanding the types of providers eligible to provide telehealth
- Allowing telehealth to satisfy in-person requirements for hospice care

WHA has [continued to advocate](#) for a permanent or at least temporary Congressional fix to allow Medicare telehealth services to continue. It is unclear whether the U.S. Senate will take up this legislation. The Congressional Budget Office estimated the extensions will cost approximately \$2.3 billion in new spending, which the bill pays for by transferring money out of the Medicare Improvement Fund.

As covered in [last week's Valued Voice](#), Congress passed legislation in March of 2022 that allows telehealth flexibilities to continue 151 days past the expiration of the public health emergency. That means even if this legislation is not taken up by the Senate, and the public health emergency expires in October, Congress would have until at least March of 2023 to take up an alternative telehealth extension.

Contact WHA Vice President of Federal and State Relations [Jon Hoelter](#) with questions.