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Welcome to America's Physician Groups' "Healthcare on the Hill," where you can get the latest on healthcare happenings in our nation's capital--and with a special focus on the value-based care movement.

As our nation--and the world--continues to face the many challenges presented by COVID-19, we are working to ensure you have the very latest information on the virus and our rapidly changing healthcare landscape.

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House Passes COVID-19 Relief Bill, Senate Prepares to Debate

After passing through the House of Representatives early Saturday morning, the \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package heads to the Senate for passage through the process of reconciliation. The bill, which includes an extension of unemployment benefits, a \$1,400 stimulus payment, and financial support for state and local governments passed largely along party lines. The bill originally included a \$15/hour federal minimum wage increase,

but the Senate parliamentarian decided on Thursday the provision could not be included in the reconciliation process under the Byrd rule. In the Senate, the bill will go through “vote-a-rama” where Senators will offer various amendments and likely pass a different version of the bill they received. The House will then have to pass the Senate’s version, or the two chambers will have to meet to draft a final version of the legislation through a conference committee. The March 14 deadline date for the expiration of jobless benefits are the goal date for President Biden’s signature.

Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee Holds Hearing on Telehealth, APG Provides Comments

On March 2, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce’s Subcommittee on Health will hold a hearing on "[The Future of Telehealth: How COVID-19 is Changing the Delivery of Virtual Care](#)." The hearing will focus on:

- Medicare
- Cost Sharing
- Privacy and Sharing
- State Licensure
- Controlled Substances
- Trends in Telehealth
 - Utilization
 - Program Integrity

The witnesses include Megan R. Mahoney, M.D., Chief of Staff for Stanford Health Care; Ateev Mehrotra, M.D., M.P.H, Associate Professor of Health Care Policy for Harvard Medical School; Elizabeth Mitchell President and CEO of Purchaser Business Group on Health; Jack Resneck, Jr., M.D., Board of Trustees for the American Medical Association; and Frederic Riccardi, President for Medicare Rights Center. The witnesses testimony will emphasized the importance for Medicare beneficiaries to continue to have access to covered telehealth benefits after the COVID emergency ends and the critical role that telehealth plays in the future of healthcare delivery in the United States.

APG sent a [letter](#) to the committee in advance of the hearing providing perspective on the lessons learned regarding telehealth services during the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) as well as some of the positive takeaways that have come from telehealth waivers that have been implemented during the PHE.

APG also signed onto a [letter](#) along with America’s Health Insurance Plans and other healthcare stakeholders that was submitted to the Committee in advance of the hearing for the record in support of the [Ensuring Parity in MA for Audio Only-Telehealth Act](#) that has been introduced in both the Senate and the House. The bill would allow diagnoses from audio-only telehealth services to count for Medicare Advantage risk adjustment helps to

ensure that health costs are adequately covered while also establishing guardrails to protect against fraud and abuse.

Congress Reintroduces the Telehealth Modernization Act

Last week, Senators Tim Scott (R-SC), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Marsha Blackburn (R-TN), Roger Marshall (R-KS), Jon Tester (D-MT), and Roger Wicker (R-MS) reintroduced the Telehealth Modernization Act. The overall goal of the Act is to remove certain restrictions on telehealth services and ensure these services continue to be covered by Medicare. The Act also makes two permanent changes that will ensure that patients can access telehealth anywhere by permanently removing Medicare's so-called "geographic and originating site" restrictions, and protects access to telehealth for patients in rural areas.

APG has been supportive of the Act as it would strengthen telehealth services that nearly 10 million beneficiaries were able to access during the COVID-19 crisis.



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