



June 15, 2023

The Honorable Brian Schatz
United States Senate
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
United States Senate
425 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ben Cardin
United States Senate
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Thune
United States Senate
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mark Warner
United States Senate
703 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith
United States Senate
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schatz, Senator Wicker, Senator Cardin, Senator Thune, Senator Warner, and Senator Hyde-Smith:

AARP, which advocates for the more than 100 million Americans age 50 and older, thanks you for introducing the Creating Opportunities Now for Necessary and Effective Care Technologies (CONNECT) for Health Act of 2023. We share your commitment to expanding access to quality health care through telehealth services, and believe this bill addresses many barriers to care in Medicare.

AARP has long advocated for removing the originating site and geographic restrictions that prevent Medicare beneficiaries from being able to use technology to get care, as so many other Americans are routinely able to do through private insurance. When seniors can use telehealth, it is not only more convenient (especially for those without access to transportation), but also improves safety, treatment adherence, and chronic disease management. It also allows greater opportunity for family caregivers to participate in the process.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced Medicare to quickly adapt to an increased need for telehealth, often relying on waivers to allow for otherwise impermissible care. We appreciate that this bill allows for the evaluation and incorporation of lessons learned during the public health emergency to responsibly expand access to health care services via telehealth. Moreover, we support the bill's use of Secretarial determination of clinical appropriateness and clinical benefit when adding services or providers eligible for telehealth coverage, rather than automatically making all emergency waivers permanent.

Again, thank you for your bipartisan leadership in addressing Medicare telehealth access. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or have your staff contact Andrew Scholnick on our Government Affairs team at ascholnick@aarp.org or 202-434-3793.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Bill Sweeney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Bill Sweeney
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs