



## American Clinical Neurophysiology Society (ACNS) Monthly Policy Update – February 2021

### **COVID Update**

Congress is moving forward with the budget reconciliation process to pass a \$1.9 trillion COVID relief legislative package. Reconciliation needs 51 votes to pass the Senate. We anticipate the relief package will not garner any Republican support based on concerns about the size and scope of the package.

Congressional timeline is set to pass the bill before unemployment provisions expire on March 14. The draft bill includes \$46 billion for testing, \$14 billion for vaccines, \$7.6 billion to hire public health workers, and \$25 billion to address health disparities and protect vulnerable populations. The draft bill would increase the ACA's tax credits, subsidize COBRA coverage, and subsidize the unemployed. Not included is funding for NIH or measures to support economic "recovery."

### **Update on Telehealth Legislation**

The Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services enacted telehealth flexibilities for patient services during the public health emergency. The administration may continue these through the end of 2021.

Congress is considering enacting permanent telehealth policies for Medicare. The first bill to address this is the [Protecting Access to Post-COVID-19 Telehealth Act of 2021](#), introduced by Reps. Mike Thompson (D-CA), Peter Welch (D-VT), Bill Johnson (R-OH), David Schweikert (R-AZ), John Curtis (R-UT), and Doris Matsui (D-CA). This bill includes four main provisions:

- Eliminates most geographic and originating site restrictions on the use of telehealth in Medicare and establishing the patient's home as an eligible distant site so patients can receive telehealth care at home and doctors can still be reimbursed;
- Prevents a sudden loss of telehealth services for Medicare beneficiaries by authorizing the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Service (CMS) to continue reimbursement for telehealth for 90 days beyond the end of the public health emergency;
- Makes permanent the disaster waiver authority, enabling Health and Human Services (HHS) to expand telehealth in Medicare during all future emergencies and disasters; and
- Requires a study on the use of telehealth during COVID, including its costs, uptake rates, measurable health outcomes, and racial and geographic disparities.

We will keep you informed on Telehealth bills.

### **Nominations for Health Agencies**

Xavier Becerra, nominee for the Secretary of Health and Human Services will have confirmation hearings on February 23 and 24.

Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, nominated to lead the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, previously led HHS' efforts to carry out the Affordable Care Act. Her confirmation hearings have not yet been scheduled.