

RON WYDEN

OREGON

RANKING MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE

221 DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-5244

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3703

COMMITTEES:

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
COMMITTEE ON BUDGET
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
JOINT COMMITTEE ON TAXATION

March 13, 2020

The Honorable Seema Verma
Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Administrator Verma,

In light of the serious threat that Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) poses to senior citizens, I write to urge you in the strongest terms possible to provide guidance exercising the waiver authority provided in H.R. 6074, the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, to expand access to telehealth services for Medicare beneficiaries during this public health emergency. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have recommended that those at higher risk—including older adults—stay home as much as possible to reduce the risk of exposure when there are COVID-19 outbreaks in their communities.¹ This new waiver authority allows the Secretary of Health and Human Services to waive originating site requirements for telehealth services in Medicare, so that seniors can receive care from their health care providers via telehealth without leaving their homes.

However, to date, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) have failed to provide any guidance or other information regarding whether and how this new telehealth waiver authority will be used, or even any indication as to when guidance might be made available. Any further delay to utilize this new telehealth waiver authority is simply unacceptable, given the urgent need to protect seniors during this public health emergency. I urge you to provide guidance immediately regarding whether and how this new waiver authority will be used to expand access to telehealth services in Medicare.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



US Senator Ron Wyden

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>