

House "Dear Colleague Letter" seeking Co-Sponsors to HR-1516

Ensure Access to Complex Wheelchair Products for People with Severe Medical Needs

Supported by multiple patient, medical professional and supplier organizations, including:

American Association for Homecare, American Physical Therapy Association,
Brain Injury Association of America, Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, Easter Seals,
National Association for Home Care & Hospice, National Coalition for Assistive and Rehab Technology,
National Multiple Sclerosis Society, National Registry of Rehabilitation Technology Suppliers,
Paralyzed Veterans of America, United Spinal Association

Dear Colleague,

Individuals with significant medical conditions like cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis and spinal cord injuries face unique physical and functional challenges and require more than just a standard wheelchair to be able to live their lives freely. Many of these individuals instead rely on complex rehabilitation technology products, such as specialized power wheelchairs, highly configurable manual wheelchairs and adaptive seating and positioning systems, to move and function on a daily basis and to meet their medical needs.

Currently, the Medicare program includes these products in the same category as standard durable medical equipment – i.e. traditional manual wheelchairs. However, individuals who use complex rehabilitation technology products tend to differ from the traditional Medicare population and have vastly different needs. Furthermore, these complex and often customizable products require a broader range of services and specialized personnel, as well as much more training and education for suppliers to ensure appropriate use.

We have introduced the *Ensuring Access to Quality Complex Rehabilitation Technology Act* (H.R. 1516) to create a separate benefit category under Medicare for these specific products. This separate category would allow for targeted coverage and payment policies that address the unique situations of this specialized subset of durable medical equipment and the people with disabilities it serves.

Additionally, to help prevent fraud and abuse, our legislation would establish clinical conditions for coverage that ensure these items are being prescribed appropriately. When these items are prescribed, an evaluation must be conducted by a licensed physical or occupational therapist with no financial relationship to the supplier. Additionally, suppliers will have to be accredited by an independent accreditation organization demonstrating that they are compliant with enhanced quality standards. This will improve program safeguards by increasing quality standards for suppliers of these items.

Please join us in ensuring that our constituents have access to quality technology that meets their needs and helps improve their quality of life. To cosponsor, or if you have any questions, please contact Amy Bos at amy.bos@mail.house.gov or at 5-5101 and/or Nicole Cohen at nicole.cohen@mail.house.gov or 5-3965.

Sincerely,

F. James Sensenbrenner
Member of Congress

Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

Dear Colleague:

We are writing to invite you to become a cosponsor of the Ensuring Access to Quality Complex Rehabilitation Technology Act of 2015 (S. 1013), a bipartisan bill to ensure access to complex rehabilitation technology (CRT) products for people with severe medical needs. CRT is critical to improving the quality of life and independence of many people living with disabilities, including individuals with significant medical conditions like cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis and spinal cord injuries.

CRT products include specialized power wheelchairs, highly configurable manual wheelchairs and adaptive seating and positioning systems, as well as, other mobility devices that require complex evaluation, fitting, design, adjustment and programming. These specialized products are designed to meet the specific and unique medical and functional needs of each patient. These products are currently included within Medicare's broad durable medical equipment (DME) benefit category, which does not provide adequate differentiation among CRT devices and doesn't allow focused policies and safeguards.

This legislation, which is supported by multiple patient, medical professional and supplier organizations, would provide appropriate recognition and coverage of CRT by creating a separate benefit category within the Medicare program. Creating a separate benefit category for CRT would help better address the unique needs of those who need access to these specialized products. This change would allow for much needed improvements in coverage policies, coding, and quality standards.

Congress has previously acknowledged that CRT power wheelchairs are unique and more specialized than standard DME. In 2008, legislation was enacted exempting these products from inclusion in Medicare's DME competitive bidding program recognizing that such inclusion would jeopardize access to this customized technology. In addition, Congress has recognized the unique nature of other customized products and services by creating a separate classification for Orthotics and Prosthetics (O&P).

Please join us in cosponsoring S. 1013 to improve the quality of life and independence of many people living with disabilities. If you have any questions regarding our request or would like to become a cosponsor, please email Constance_Payne@cochran.senate.gov or Veronica_Duron@schumer.senate.gov.

Sincerely,



Thad Cochran
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator