



October 29, 2020

Re: Please Cosponsor H.R. 8581, the Access to Assistive Technology and Devices for Americans Study Act (“Triple A” Study Act)

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the undersigned members of the Independence Through Enhancement of Medicare and Medicaid (ITEM) Coalition, we write to express our support for legislation recently introduced by Reps. G.K. Butterfield (D-NC) and Brett Guthrie (R-KY) the Access to Assistive Technology and Devices for Americans Study Act (the “Triple A” Study Act, H.R. 8581). **We urge you to cosponsor this bipartisan legislation, which would expand the knowledge base around access to assistive technologies and devices (“AT”) and lay the groundwork for improvements in care and policy solutions to support people with limb loss, limb difference, and other mobility impairments.**

The ITEM Coalition is a national consumer and clinician-led coalition advocating for access to and coverage of assistive devices, technologies, and related services for persons with injuries, illnesses, disabilities, and chronic conditions of all ages. Our members represent individuals with a wide range of disabling conditions, as well as the providers who serve them, including limb loss and limb difference, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, brain injury, stroke, paralysis, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, hearing, speech, and visual impairments, myositis, and other life-altering conditions. The Amputee Coalition, the national association representing people affected by limb loss, is a member of the ITEM Coalition Steering Committee, and we applaud the organization for its leadership on this issue.

The patients our members represent face varied and unnecessary barriers to accessing the care they need in a variety of settings. Attempts to address these barriers through informed, considered policymaking are often stymied by a lack of consistent, reliable data on these barriers and the appropriate solutions for improving care.

The Triple A Study Act would direct the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to craft a report evaluating appropriate coverage and provision of health care services to people with limb loss or limb difference, including information on the following areas:

- Timely access to care, including education for patients regarding their AT options;
- Assessment and guidelines for assistive device determinations;
- Policies for matching specific assistive devices to individual needs;
- Affordability of AT;
- Provision of rehabilitative services to support adoption of AT; and
- Timelines for assessment of AT and any related surgeries.

The report would also compare data on practices and outcomes relating to coverage of assistive devices across payers including Medicare, the Veterans Health Administration, and the commercial insurance market, allowing for meaningful analysis and “apples to apples” comparisons across different payers. The data contained in this report would provide important insight on access to mobility technologies and devices, custom orthoses and prostheses, denial of claims, coding for physician or physical therapy assessments, the rate of patients returning to work after receiving AT, and assistive technology and device expenses relative to total spending by individual payers.

This legislation would offer policymakers a valuable tool to evaluate whether further reforms are necessary to ensure that payers are appropriately serving patients in need of AT.

Enactment of H.R. 8581 would be an important step toward ensuring that all people with limb loss or limb difference are able to access appropriate, safe, medically necessary, and patient-centered care. **On behalf of patients with limb loss, limb difference, and mobility impairment, and the providers who serve them, we urge you to cosponsor this bipartisan legislation and support its enactment into law.**

For more information on H.R. 8581 or to cosponsor this bipartisan legislation, please contact Caitlin Van Sant (Caitlin.VanSant@mail.house.gov) in Rep. Butterfield’s office or Sophie Trainor (Sophie.Trainor@mail.house.gov) in Rep. Guthrie’s office.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of this request, and we look forward to working with you to continue to advance federal policy for individuals with disabilities. Should you have any further questions, please contact Peter Thomas and Joe Nahra, ITEM Coalition coordinators, at Peter.Thomas@PowersLaw.com and Joseph.Nahra@PowersLaw.com or by phone at 202-466-6550.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned Members of the ITEM Coalition

ACCSES

American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

American Association for Homecare

American Association of People with Disabilities

American Association on Health and Disability

American Cochlear Implant Alliance

American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine

American Macular Degeneration Foundation

American Medical Rehabilitation Providers Association

American Network of Community Options and Resources

American Physical Therapy Association

American Therapeutic Recreation Association

Amputee Coalition*

Assistive Technology Industry Association
Association of Rehabilitation Nurses
Brain Injury Association of America
Caregiver Action Network
Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation*
Clinician Task Force
Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation
Institute for Matching Person and Technology
Lakeshore Foundation
Long Island Center for Independent Living
National Association for the Advancement of Orthotics and Prosthetics
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers
National Coalition for Assistive and Rehab Technology
National Council on Independent Living
National Registry of Rehabilitation Technology Suppliers
Paralyzed Veterans of America*
Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America
Spina Bifida Association*
United Cerebral Palsy
United Spinal Association*
Viscardi Center

***Member of the ITEM Coalition Steering Committee**