

Reichert Introduces Critical Legislation to Improve Healthcare for Lymphedema Patients

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Washington, D.C. – Today, U.S. Congressman Dave Reichert (R-WA), and cosponsors Congressmen Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Leonard Lance (R-NJ), and Bruce Braley (D-IA) introduced the Lymphedema Treatment Act, H.R. 3877, to ensure Medicare coverage for the millions of Americans who suffer from this condition.

“Seniors who suffer from lymphedema should not be punished for taking the necessary steps to treat their condition,” **said Reichert.** “By rectifying Medicare’s failure to cover compression garments we give seniors their best chance and real hope to fight back against this chronic disease. I am pleased to be joined by my colleagues from both sides of the aisle in this fight against lymphedema.”

Blumenauer said, “We’ve seen that some of the greatest changes for good in our healthcare system start as reforms to Medicare. The Lymphedema Treatment Act makes sure that Medicare will cover the necessary treatments to combat this debilitating and disfiguring disease and to open the door for innovative new treatments in the future. It’s a necessary bill that will help alleviate needless suffering.”

“Lymphedema afflicts nearly six million Americans and our legislation offers a chance to utilize the equipment needed for care,” **said Lance,** a member of the House Health Subcommittee and chairman of the House Rare Disease Caucus. “Cancer patients are at an especially great risk of lymphedema and need access to compression equipment to treat the condition effectively. I thank Congressman

Reichert for leading this effort as we take another step in bridging the gap between proper diagnosis and access to treatment. I also praise the work of the members of the Lymphedema Advocacy Group who have been tireless advocates for patients and their loved ones.”

“The risks and complications lymphedema causes can be helped by treatment, but we need to make sure that treatment is available to those who need it,” **Braley said**. “Ensuring Medicare covers the supplies needed for treatment would be a huge victory for those fighting this disease—and is a common-sense way to help improve their lives.”

Founder and executive director of the Lymphedema Advocacy Group **Heather Ferguson added**, “The Lymphedema Treatment Act provides a ray of hope for the millions of Americans who suffer from lymphedema. Compression therapy is a cornerstone of lymphedema treatment, without which patients are unable to effectively manage their condition. This often leads to disease progression, comorbidities and costly complications that could have been avoided. By allowing coverage for compression supplies, this bill is pivotal in improving patient care while reducing the overall healthcare costs associated with this chronic disease.”

Background

Lymphedema is a chronic condition resulting from damaged or inadequate lymph nodes or lymphatic vessels that afflicts millions of Americans. It is a disease that one can be born with but it is most often caused by cancer treatments that damage the body’s lymph system or immune functions. Due to the painful swelling that results from lymphedema, compression therapy is an essential component of treatment but compression supplies are not covered by Medicare despite being an ongoing necessity. H.R. 3877 closes this coverage gap by requiring Medicare to cover lymphedema compression items.