

October 9, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Room S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Room S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leaders Schumer and McCarthy:

On behalf of the 1.5 million Medicare beneficiaries living with chronic lymphatic system failure (lymphedema), the undersigned organizations urge you to pass the Lymphedema Treatment Act, H.R.1948 / S.518, in this calendar year. The Lymphedema Treatment Act improves the coverage for the treatment of lymphedema from any cause by amending Medicare statute to allow for coverage of compression supplies.

Lymphedema, like other chronic conditions, has no cure, but its effects can be mitigated through proper management. As stated by the National Cancer Institute, “The goal of lymphedema treatment centers on controlling limb swelling and minimizing complications.”¹

The most vital components of treatment are medical compression garments and supplies prescribed to reduce complications and disease progression by controlling swelling. For example, in 2004, the Commonwealth of Virginia mandated private insurance and Medicaid coverage for lymphedema compression supplies. This coverage has proven to improve patient outcomes and quality of life, reduce utilization, and reduce costs. Specifically, a ten-year longitudinal study of Virginia’s lymphedema treatment mandate found over a 40% reduction in physician and therapy visits, and a greater than 50% reduction in hospitalizations.²

As policymakers strive to help beneficiaries live healthier and more productive lives, we encourage you to pass this legislation that has been cosponsored by 333 House members and 65 Senators, making it the most supported healthcare bill currently before Congress. The measure will address the growing number of cancer-related cases, as well as those beneficiaries who acquire lymphedema from other causes or who are born with a compromised lymphatic system.

¹ National Cancer Institute. (2015). Lymphedema (PDQ®)—Health Professional Version. <http://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/side-effects/lymphedema/lymphedema-hp-pdq#section/all>.

² Weiss, R. (2016). Cost of a lymphedema treatment mandate-10 years of experience in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Health Economics Review 6: 42. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13561-016-0117-3>.

The Lymphedema Treatment Act is a bipartisan, common-sense solution that closes an unintended gap in Medicare coverage. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) acknowledged the necessity of compression therapy in the treatment and management of lymphedema in its National Coverage Determination for Pneumatic Compression Pumps.³

The federal government recognized its importance when it included coverage for compression garments for the treatment of breast cancer-related lymphedema in the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998.⁴ Furthermore, lymphedema compression supplies are already covered by Veterans Affairs, TriCare, and Medicaid plans in 44 states plus the District of Columbia.⁵

It's time to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries with lymphedema have coverage for these vital, prescription medical supplies that are the cornerstone in the standard of care for the chronic condition. It is imperative that Congress pass the Lymphedema Treatment Act this year.

Sincerely,



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Lymphedema Advocacy Group
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Together with the following organizations and hospitals:

American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Lymphedema Framework Project
American Medical Association
American Nurses Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Physical Therapy Association
Boston Children's Hospital, Vascular Anomalies Center
Breast Cancer Action

³ The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). (2019). National Coverage Analysis (NCA) for Lymphedema Pumps (CAG-00016N). <https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/details/nca-details.aspx?NCAId=50&ver=6&NcaName=Lymphedema+Pumps&DocID=CAG-00016N&bc=gAAAAABAAAA&>.

⁴ The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). (2019). Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act (WHCRA). https://www.cms.gov/ccio/programs-and-initiatives/other-insurance-protections/whcra_factsheet.html.

⁵ Lymphedema Advocacy Group. (2019). Federal and State Plans that Provide Coverage for Medical Compression Supplies. <https://lymphedematreatmentact.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Federal-and-Medicaid-Compression-Coverage-List.pdf>.

Cancer Legal Care
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
Disability Rights Legal Center
Essentially Women, a division of VGM Group, Inc.
EveryLife Foundation for Rare Diseases
James Cancer Hospital & Solove Research Institute at The Ohio State University
Lighthouse Lymphedema Network
Living Beyond Breast Cancer
Lymphatic Education & Research Network
Lymphology Association of North America
Moffitt Cancer Center
National Comprehensive Cancer Network
National Lymphedema Network
Oncology Nursing Society
Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance
Penn Medicine Cancer Rehabilitation
Phelan McDermid Syndrome Foundation
Seattle Cancer Care Alliance
Society for Vascular Nursing
Society of Gynecologic Oncology
Susan G. Komen
UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center
University of Vermont Cancer Center
Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nurses Society

CC:

Sen. Chuck Grassley, Chair, Committee on Finance
Sen. Ron Wyden, Ranking Member, Committee on Finance
Rep. Frank Pallone, Chair, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Rep. Greg Walden, Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Rep. Richard Neal, Chair, Committee on Ways and Means
Rep. Kevin Brady, Ranking Member, Committee on Ways and Means
Sen. Maria Cantwell, Committee on Finance
Sen. Todd Young, Committee on Finance
Rep. Jan Schakowsky Committee on Energy and Commerce
Rep. Buddy Carter, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Rep. Earl Blumenauer, Committee on Ways and Means
Rep. Mike Kelly, Committee on Ways and Means