



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEONS

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
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August 9, 2021

The Honorable Jason Smith
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Josh Gottheimer
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Smith and Gottheimer,

On behalf of the American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS), I wish to express our support for H.R. 3447 the “Permanency for Audio-Only Telehealth Act”. We applaud your efforts to permanently allow Medicare to pay for doctor visits via audio-only phone calls, rather than requiring a video component for every call.

The COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) led to significant growth in the use of telehealth services among surgical specialties, including orthopaedics. Policy changes enacted to temporarily remove many barriers to access for telemedicine during the PHE contributed to this growth. These policies are set to expire at the end of the PHE. Continued access to telehealth services is a critical component to orthopaedic patients, many of whom face mobility issues that make it difficult to see their doctor in person for diagnoses that can be easily delivered via telehealth.

AAOS believes that telemedicine services provided through Medicare should not be limited to those who have access to video capabilities and sufficient broadband and internet connectivity. Access to audio-only telephone-based services is especially important for Medicare beneficiaries of limited means and the elimination of coverage for audio-only telemedicine visits would disproportionately impact underserved communities that may face barriers to access.

I thank you for your leadership and introduction of the Permanency for Audio-Only Telehealth Act to ensure Medicare beneficiaries do not lose critical access to audio-only doctor visits following the expiration of the COVID-19 PHE. AAOS appreciates and recognizes your substantial efforts to advance this critical policy.

Sincerely,

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel K. Guy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Daniel K. Guy, MD, FAAOS
President, American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons

cc: Felix H. Savoie, III, MD, FAAOS, AAOS First Vice-President
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