

# Reichert, Blumenauer, Lance, and Schakowsky Introduce Bill to Improve Access to Lymphedema Treatments

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**Washington, D.C.** – Yesterday, U.S. Representatives Dave Reichert (R-WA), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Leonard Lance (R-NJ), and Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) introduced the Lymphedema Treatment Act, H.R. 1608, to ensure Medicare coverage for the millions of Americans who suffer from this condition.

“We should be enabling seniors who suffer from lymphedema to have the best possible access to necessary treatments for their condition,” **said Reichert.** “Making sure that Medicare covers compression garments is a common-sense way to give individuals real hope to fight back against this chronic condition and obtain their best possible quality of life.”

**Blumenauer said,** “Making sure that our health care system is designed so that those suffering from chronic illness can receive necessary treatments is essential. The Lymphedema Treatment Act will enable Medicare to improve care for patients by covering treatments that are crucial to combating its ailments. This is an important bill that will affect and improve the lives of many and strengthen our health care system that today falls short without this Act.”

“Our legislation seeks to close the Medicare coverage gap for equipment and therapies needed by the nearly six million Americans suffering from Lymphedema,” **said Lance, a member of the House Health Subcommittee and co-chairman of the House Rare Disease Caucus.** “This bill will improve patient care and reduce overall health care costs associated with this chronic disease.”

“I am a strong believer in strengthening Medicare, and the Lymphedema Treatment Act is a prime example of how we can ensure that millions of Americans get the care they need,” said Schakowsky. “Those who suffer from Lymphedema need medical supplies that can be costly. One of my close friends suffers from this condition, so I am very aware of its impact. This legislation will result in life-changing treatment for those with Lymphedema,” **said Schakowsky.**

Founder and executive director of the Lymphedema Advocacy Group **Heather Ferguson added,** “Compression is to lymphedema what medication is to many other diseases - indispensable! Insurance coverage for their doctor-prescribed compression treatment supplies will enable lymphedema patients, the majority of whom are cancer survivors, to avoid costly complications and debilitating disease progression. Passage of the Lymphedema Treatment Act will help to minimize the healthcare costs associated with this chronic disease, while allowing the millions of Americans affected by lymphedema to live a better quality of life.”

## **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. 1608 closes this coverage gap by requiring Medicare to cover lymphedema compression items.