



United States Senate



Cantwell, Grassley Introduce Bill to Improve Medicare Coverage for People Living with Lymphedema

Bill would improve care, lower hospitalization rate for lymphedema patients

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA), and nine other senators introduced bipartisan legislation to improve Medicare coverage for lymphedema patients. The Lymphedema Treatment Act would increase and improve care for Medicare beneficiaries with lymphedema by ensuring Medicare covers physician-prescribed compression therapy garments.

“Lymphedema affects more than 6,300 patients in Washington state and millions of Americans. It’s critical we update Medicare to reflect necessary and effective treatments for this condition,” said Cantwell. **“The Lymphedema Treatment Act is a common sense approach to improving care for Medicare beneficiaries living with lymphedema while reducing costly hospitalizations.”**

“Medicare ought to reflect the modern practice of medicine,” Grassley said. **“The equipment to treat lymphedema is something doctors recommend and that patients need. Lymphedema is more common than people might realize. It can affect breast cancer surgery survivors, for example. It makes sense to help here.”**

The Lymphedema Treatment Act would close this coverage gap and improve care for Medicare beneficiaries with lymphedema by ensuring that Medicare covers physician-prescribed compression therapy items under a new Durable Medical Equipment category. These items include multi-layer compression bandaging systems, custom or standard fit compression garments, non- or low-elastic compression garments and wraps, and other compression items determined by the Secretary of Health and Human Services to be effective in preventing or treating lymphedema.

Lymphedema is an incurable but treatable condition affecting between three and five million Americans, many of whom are Medicare beneficiaries. It is a chronic condition caused by injury, trauma or congenital defects in the lymphatic system. If left untreated or inadequately treated, it can lead to complications including loss of function, disability, and in some cases even death.

The Lymphedema Treatment Act has broad, bipartisan support. Congressman Dave Reichert (R-WA) has introduced companion legislation in the House. The bill is also supported by a wide range of advocacy groups including the Lymphedema Advocacy Group, American Medical Association, and the American Cancer Society.

“The Lymphedema Treatment Act will ensure that Medicare beneficiaries have the necessary medical supplies to manage this chronic and potentially debilitating condition. We are grateful to Senator Cantwell, Senator Grassley and all of the bill co-sponsors for their efforts to help the millions of Americans living with lymphedema maintain their health and quality of life,” said Heather Ferguson, founder and executive director of the Lymphedema Advocacy Group.

Senators co-sponsoring the bill include: Roy Blunt (R-MO), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Chris Coons (D-DE), Joni Ernst (R-IA), Al Franken (D-MN), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), and Tom Tillis (R-NC).