ABOUT LYMPHEDEMA:

Lymphedema (chronic lymphatic system failure) has a multitude of causes and is the end result of any significant impairment to all or part of the lymphatic organ system. It is marked by an accumulation of lymph fluid (swelling) in parts of the body where lymph nodes or lymphatic vessels are damaged or inadequate.

An estimated 3-5 million Americans are affected by this chronic but treatable condition, most commonly from cancer, with 1.5-3 million being Medicare beneficiaries. A growing number of men, women, and children are affected by lymphedema as cancer survivorship increases.

Untreated or inadequately treated lymphedema is progressive, leading to complications, comorbidities, loss of function, disability, and in some cases death. Compression therapy is the essential cornerstone of treatment, without which patients cannot effectively manage this chronic condition.

WHY THIS LEGISLATION IS NEEDED:

Starting in 2001, the Medicare program issued an advisory on the importance of compression garments. A year later, a National Coverage Determination was published highlighting such garments as part of a conservative treatment regimen intended to reduce and control lymphedema-related swelling. To date, HHS acknowledges the importance of compression supplies and indicates that legislative authority is needed.

WHAT THIS LEGISLATION WILL DO:

- Provide for Medicare coverage of prescribed medical compression garments used in the treatment and management of lymphedema.
- Enable lymphedema patients to maintain their overall health, activities of daily living, and quality of life.
- Reduce the total healthcare costs associated with this disease by decreasing the incidence of complications, comorbidities, disabilities, and hospitalizations.
- Align Medicare coverage with existing Federal precedent established by TriCare, Veterans Affairs, and Federal BCBS, all of which provide coverage for these supplies.