



National Association for the Support of Long Term Care

June 15, 2020

The Honorable Vern Buchanan
U.S. House of Representatives
Attn: Don Green
2427 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: NASL Support of the Outpatient Therapy Modernization and Stabilization Act

Dear Congressman Buchanan:

On behalf of the members of the National Association for the Support of Long Term Care (NASL), we offer our support for your legislation, the *Outpatient Therapy Modernization and Stabilization Act*. This important legislation will help Medicare beneficiaries maintain and increase access to rehabilitation therapy services provided in skilled nursing facilities, and other settings that are currently burdened by providing care during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

NASL is a trade association representing providers and suppliers of ancillary services to long term and post-acute care (LTPAC) settings. NASL's members include rehabilitation therapy providers that employ physical therapists (PTs), occupational therapists (OTs), and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) who provide therapy services to patients in skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) as well as other long term and post-acute care settings. In addition, NASL also represents developers of health information technology (HIT) with full clinical and point-of-care IT systems, providers and suppliers of clinical lab services, and portable x-ray services.

The impact of the COVID-19 public health emergency on patient access to therapy services has been significant. As a result of federal guidance that requires screening and isolation protocols, patients are losing access to rehab therapy as facilities decrease the number of essential healthcare personnel who can enter nursing facilities in order to prevent spread. Allowing rehabilitation therapists who treat patients in nursing facilities the ability to furnish services to their patients via telehealth would greatly help with patient access to services as well as improve safety for patients and caregivers by reducing traffic into health care facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, therapy providers, as well as more than three dozen other health care providers, are also facing a significant reimbursement reduction that will be imposed just when these providers may be emerging from the public health emergency. In the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid

Services' (CMS's) CY 2020 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (PFS) final rule, the agency included significant cuts to reimbursement, effective January 1, 2021, to three dozen provider groups in order to increase payment for evaluation and management codes, which are also known as E/M codes. Rehabilitation therapy services are slated for an 8% cut at a time when these providers will just be beginning to recover and return to a new sense of normal following this unprecedented time in history.

Stability in long term care will be essential to recovery, and the critical policy solutions included in your legislation to assist with patient access to care and support for health care providers' practices will be truly impactful. The expansion of telehealth coverage under the Medicare program is also one of NASL's top priorities. That is why we support passage of the *Outpatient Therapy Modernization and Stabilization Act*, which would do exactly that.

NASL appreciates your leadership in developing this important legislation. We look forward to working with you, Congress, to pass the *Outpatient Therapy Modernization and Stabilization Act*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cynthia Morton". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Cynthia K. Morton, MPA
NASL Executive Vice President