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Congress Introduces Telehealth Bill with EM Provisions

On Wednesday, a bipartisan and bicameral group of legislators led by Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI) in the Senate and Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA) in the House introduced the CONNECT for Health Act of 2019 (H.R. 4932/S. 2741), legislation to promote the use of telehealth services in Medicare. ACEP directly contributed to this legislation, providing [recommendations](#) in response to the Telehealth Caucus' Request for Information earlier this year and working directly with Sen. Schatz's office on language included in the bill specific to emergency medicine.

The bill's provisions include removing geographic restrictions on certain originating sites for emergency medical care services, a change ACEP has long advocated for. The bill also includes provision which requires CMS' process to add telehealth services to better consider how telehealth can improve access to care, corresponding with ACEP's continued regulatory efforts to add emergency services to the list of approved telehealth services.

Wednesday's press conference can be viewed on [Sen. Schatz's facebook page](#). During his remarks, Sen. Schatz noted how the bill will improve the use of telehealth for emergency services (at 8:50). And in sharing how more than 120 organizations officially support the legislation, Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS) specifically noted ACEP's support (at 11:20).

A summary of the bill is available [here](#).



FDA Inter-agency Task Force on Drug Shortages Releases Report to Congress

On Tuesday, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released the long-awaited Drug Shortages Task Force report, "Drug Shortages: Root Causes and Potential Solutions. The report identifies three root causes of drug shortages and recommends specific solutions to address these underlying issues. Overall, the report concludes that that there is no simple approach to address drug shortages and that the solutions proposed in the report will "require multi-stakeholder efforts and rethinking of

business practices throughout the health care system.”

ACEP had played a [key role](#) in helping to get the FDA to focus on finding solutions to address drug shortages. In 2018, ACEP worked with congressional champions to develop a letter to the FDA calling for the creation of the Task Force to determine the root causes of drug shortages and develop recommendations for Congress. We were gratified that the FDA moved quickly to form this Task Force shortly thereafter. Throughout the development of the Task Force’s report, ACEP participated in several meetings with the FDA and submitted [comments](#) in January 2019 in response to the FDA’s November 2018 public meeting. Several ACEP priorities are highlighted in the report, including the need to provide greater transparency to ensure adequate competition in the marketplace, and better supply chain monitoring and response to guarantee the availability of lifesaving emergency medications.

To read the report, please [click here](#).

To read ACEP’s press release on the release of the report, please [click here](#).



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