**As your constituent and a member of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), I am urging you to cosponsor the Medicare Telehealth Parity Act of 2015 (H.R. 2948). ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 182,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Our professions are very qualified to provide services via telehealth technologies and our Medicare patients deserve our inclusion for their health care needs.

Over the past several years, technological advances have made it possible for audiologists and speech-language pathologists to provide telehealth services for patients that research has shown to be equivalent to the care they provide in face-to-face settings. There are no inherent limits to where telepractice can be implemented as long as the services comply with national, state, institutional, and professional regulations and policies. The primary obstacle my profession faces when seeking to treat patients through telehealth technology is reimbursement at the federal level.

Computer-based clinical applications are common for audiology today. For example, audiometers, auditory brainstem response, otoacoustic emissions, and immittance testing equipment are frequently computer peripherals, which can be interfaced to existing telehealth networks. Currently, manufacturers are promoting equipment with ‘store-and-forward’ capabilities. Practice areas where tele-audiology is already being used include aural rehabilitation, cochlear implant fitting, pure tone audiometry, speech in noise testing, and videostroboscopy.

For speech-language pathology, telehealth allows patients to receive medically necessary ongoing treatment without forcing them to travel to the provider or vice versa. Tele-speech is being used in the assessment and treatment of a wide range of speech and language disorders, including articulation disorders, autism, dysarthria, fluency disorders, language and cognitive disorders, and swallowing and voice disorders.

As a constituent of yours, I urge you to cosponsor this legislation that will finally include us as qualified providers of telehealth services under Medicare for the benefit of patients who have difficulty of receiving necessary health care. This legislation will improve patient access and encourage further adoption of telehealth technologies for treatment, which can help lower costs and hospital readmission rates as well as identify serious medical issues early.

I look forward to continuing our dialog on this issue and how it effects the Medicare patients I treat. Please contact me or Sam Hewitt, ASHA's director of political advocacy, at** **202-624-5961** **or** **shewitt@asha.org****, if you have any questions or comments.**