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New Bill Aims to Launch Pilot Programs for Telehealth, Remote Patient Monitoring

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A bill introduced last week by US Rep. David Schweikert would launch demonstration projects in Medicare, Medicaid and the VA for innovative new telehealth remote patient monitoring and digital therapeutic services.

July 26, 2021 - A new bill before Congress aims to expand the use of telehealth, remote patient monitoring, digital therapeutics and other connected health programs through demonstration projects for Medicare Advantage, Medicaid and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Advanced Safe Testing at Residence Telehealth (A-START) Act of 2021 aims “to expand access to innovative health care technologies and reduce health care costs,” says US Rep. David Schweikert (R-AZ), who introduced the bill last week.

"This legislation is an important step in expanding patient and provider access to healthcare innovation to promote high quality, 21st century technology-based care," Schweikert [**said in a press release**](#). “The A-START Act would accelerate the enormous achievements recently made in expanding telehealth, diagnostics, screening, wearables, and patient monitoring technology. Patients deserve access to the best information and data that modern technology can provide, to make informed decisions about their health.”

[**The 21-page bill**](#) sets up a roster of programs for MA, Medicaid and the VA for “assistive telehealth consultations” and other clinical tests that can be delivered in the patient’s home, including those for the diagnosis of COVID-19, influenza and a wide range of chronic diseases. It would create value-based insurance design demonstration programs for MA members, Medicaid grant programs and a pilot program within the VA.

The bill joins a crowded agenda of telehealth legislation before Congress, which is facing increased pressure to develop long-term telehealth policy before the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Schweikert is no stranger to telehealth legislation. A member of the Congressional Telehealth Caucus, he and colleagues [re-introduced the Protecting Access to Post-COVID-19 Telehealth Act](#) and an earlier version of the A-START bill – [called the Safe Testing at Residence Telehealth \(START\) Act of 2021](#) – this past January.

That bill, also introduced in 2020, focuses on mandating Medicare coverage for virtual care COVID-19 tests approved by the US Food and Drug Administration. The tests would be conducted at home with a telehealth consult.