

Complex Rehab Technology 2019 Congressional Asks

Pass Legislation Needed to Protect Access for People with Disabilities

Complex Rehab Technology (CRT) products include specialized wheelchairs, seating systems, and other adaptive equipment used by people with significant disabilities such as ALS, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, spinal cord injury, and traumatic brain injury. This equipment is individually configured to meet their unique medical needs and maximize their independence. It also plays a significant role in minimizing and controlling their health care costs. An “Introduction To CRT” video can be viewed at www.access2crt.org.

Unfortunately, the ability for this small population of people to access this specialized technology and supporting services is being threatened. Congress is urged to protect access to CRT for the people with disabilities who depend on it by passing two critical bills in 2019.

PRIORITY 1: Cosponsor and Pass H.R. 2293 and S. 1223 to Stop Inappropriate Application of DME Competitive Bid Program Rates to Complex Rehab Manual Wheelchair Accessories.

Representatives John Larson (D-CT) and Lee Zeldin (R-NY) have re-introduced H.R. 2293 to stop CMS’ inappropriate application of Medicare Competitive Bid Program pricing to accessories (a/k/a critical components) used with CRT manual wheelchairs. Senators Bob Casey (D-PA) and Rob Portman (R-OH) have also re-introduced S. 1223 to provide similar protection. The House language was included in 2018 year-end legislation (H.R. 7217) which passed in the House 400 to 11. Unfortunately, the Senate did not take up that legislation before adjourning for the year. The Senate bill finished last year with solid bipartisan support from 25 cosponsors.

The issue relating to CRT “power” wheelchair accessories was addressed with a CMS policy correction back in 2017, but the “manual” wheelchair accessories problem is a lingering issue that has not yet been resolved. Passage of this legislation is needed to fix the disparity for people with disabilities who use a CRT manual wheelchair as they currently do not have the same access to accessories (critical components) as those using a CRT power wheelchair.

PRIORITY 2: Cosponsor and Pass H.R. 2408 to Establish a Separate Benefit Category for Complex Rehab Technology and Provide Needed Comprehensive Improvements.

The “Ensuring Access to Quality Complex Rehabilitation Technology Act” (H.R. 2408) has been re-introduced by Representatives Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI) and Brian Higgins (D-NY). Legislation last session had broad bipartisan support from 116 cosponsors.

Problems continue to grow because these specialized CRT items are grouped within Medicare’s “standard” Durable Medical equipment (DME) category. The bill will create a separate category for CRT within the Medicare benefit just like the one that exists for Orthotics and Prosthetics (custom braces and artificial limbs). It will also provide needed coverage, coding, and safeguard improvements focused on the needs of people with disabilities. Over 50 national patient, consumer, and medical professional organizations have formally communicated their written support to Congress.

For more information on Complex Rehab Technology visit www.ncart.us