

The Patient Access to Disposable Medical Technology Act of 2015 (S. 1253)

Senators Burr & Bennet

Why Doesn't Medicare Pay for Disposable Medical Technology?

Medicare's durable medical equipment (DME) benefit provides Medicare beneficiaries with access to certain medical technologies in the home and community settings. However, the statutory definition of DME is decades old and written at a time when typical DME products were items like wheelchairs and crutches. Today, a number of innovative, disposable technologies have become available to patients that can be easier to use and less expensive than their durable counterparts and provide benefits to patients. Unfortunately, since "disposable" cannot be considered "durable" under the Medicare statute, Medicare patients cannot benefit from these innovative and more modern technologies.

Why is this bill important to patients?

Many Medicare beneficiaries rely on disposable medical devices that provide healing in the home setting following a hospital stay. Unfortunately, current Medicare DME payment policy could cause Medicare beneficiaries to face a gap in care as they transition from the hospital to the home. A product they receive in the hospital may not be covered once they return home. This lack of continuity of care could lead to an avoidable readmission or adverse outcome. Unfortunately, patients may be forced to rely on bulkier, outdated technologies, and as a result, they may be confined to the home while recovering and have restricted mobility. Patients in the Medicare program should have the ability to access the DME that will meet their individualized needs—including disposable DME technologies. Veterans who are served by the Medicare program and have unique health care needs could also benefit from access to these disposable technologies.

Modernizing Medicare's DME Policy for Patients

The Patient Access to Disposable Medical Technology Act of 2015 would modernize Medicare DME policy by requiring Medicare to cover DME that otherwise would not be covered as DME but for the fact that it is not durable. The payment rate for these technologies would be 95 percent of the analogous DME product. Moreover, by modernizing Medicare's DME policy, this legislation will help to provide a clear path for reimbursement for disposable DME technologies and also help to encourage continued and future innovation of DME products on behalf of patients. Innovation in health care technologies, such as disposable technologies, will help to advance cost-effective, easy to use products, which also hold the potential to lower Medicare spending and the health of beneficiaries served by this program.