



May 31, 2024

Dear Senator:

We are writing as a group of more than 30 patient, healthcare professional, and industry organizations to request that you cosponsor bipartisan legislation S.3821, the Supplemental Oxygen Access Reform (SOAR) Act. The SOAR Act, sponsored by Senators Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Mark Warner (D-VA) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), will ensure individuals enrolled in Medicare who require supplemental oxygen have appropriate access to this life-giving treatment. This legislation is critical to the lives of over 1.5 million Americans who are facing serious health risks because they do not currently have access to the appropriate supplemental oxygen equipment and services.

Since 2011, supplemental oxygen has been part of Medicare's DMEPOS Competitive Bidding Program, resulting in significant decreases in payments for oxygen equipment and supplies. While we appreciate that payment reductions have produced Medicare savings, they have come at the unacceptable cost of access to medically necessary oxygen equipment, supplies, and services for people who require supplemental oxygen. Given the inadequate Medicare reimbursement rates, many individuals who require supplemental oxygen do not receive the types of oxygen systems that are needed. The Medicare program also does not reimburse for the services of respiratory therapists, which are often necessary – especially when they are given a new oxygen prescription – to support individuals' care. Due to inadequate oxygen access and services, these individuals are at high risk for worsening health, avoidable emergency room visits, and hospitalizations.

The SOAR Act would remove all oxygen services and equipment from the competitive bidding reimbursement system and create a new reimbursement system for this benefit. It will add a payment for respiratory therapy services to ensure individuals who use supplemental oxygen have the necessary training on using oxygen, establish an oxygen users' bill of rights, and establish national standardized documentation requirements that rely on a template rather than prescriber medical records.

Individuals with the most significant oxygen needs cannot use small, portable oxygen concentrators (known as POCs) because they do not provide high flow rates. Instead, these people are currently dependent on large tanks of compressed, gaseous oxygen. These large tanks of oxygen are heavy, bulky, and may provide only a couple of hours of oxygen at a time. People who have any sort of mobility issues struggle to get around with even one of these large tanks. Consequently, those individuals who need high flow rates often end up effectively housebound.

The SOAR Act would bring significant health and well-being benefits to the 1.5 million individuals living with COPD, heart disease, pulmonary hypertension, pulmonary fibrosis, people awaiting lung transplants and other advanced respiratory diseases who rely on supplemental oxygen. Oxygen therapy can decrease mortality, reduce shortness of breath, and increase exercise capacity. We request that you cosponsor the SOAR Act (S.3821) and urge the legislation be passed in 2024.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Allergy and Asthma Network
Alpha-1 Foundation
American Academy of Sleep Medicine
American Association for Respiratory Care
American Association of Cardiovascular and
Pulmonary Rehabilitation
American College of Chest Physicians
American Lung Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Thoracic Society
ARDS Alliance, Inc.
APTA Academy of Cardiovascular &
Pulmonary Physical Therapy
Children's Interstitial and Diffuse Lung
Disease (chILD) Foundation
COPD Foundation
The Council for Quality Respiratory Care
Cystic Fibrosis Foundation
Cystic Fibrosis Research Institute
Dorney-Koppel Foundation
Foundation for Sarcoidosis Research
The LAM Foundation
National Scleroderma Foundation
NTM Info and Research
The PAP Foundation

Patients Rising
PCD Foundation
PF Warriors
Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation
Pulmonary Hypertension Association
Respiratory Health Association
Running On Air
TSC Alliance
VGM & Associates
Wescoe Foundation for Pulmonary Fibrosis