

Dear Members of Congress,

We write in support of the Supporting Patient Education and Knowledge (SPEAK) Act, H.R.6033, led by Representatives Michelle Steel, Jimmy Gomez and 28 bipartisan cosponsors. This legislation recognizes the importance of telehealth access for all people using health care and works to ensure language is not a barrier to accessing it.

The growth of telehealth as a primary means for patients to receive health care presents an important opportunity to ensure this technology is accessible by all Americans. As a growing industry, many telehealth platforms are primarily available in English only and not compatible with virtual interpreting services. This means the [25 million](#) Americans with limited English proficiency (LEP) may be unable to take advantage of the conveniences and enhanced choices presented by it.

The SPEAK Act would bring together public and private actors through the leadership of the Department of Health and Human Services to identify best practices and ways to improve telehealth access for people with LEP, resulting in a new resource for patients and telehealth providers. The bill ensures that health information technology providers, physicians, hospitals, health insurance companies, language services providers, and patient voices are included in this process.

It is important that we make progress on this issue because:

- Adults with LEP have [20% lower odds](#) of having telemedicine visits than adults with English proficiency.
- People with LEP are [more likely](#) to report worse experiences in video telehealth visits than those without.
- A secret shopper [study](#) found Spanish speaking patients were much less likely to be able to schedule a telehealth appointment than those who spoke English.

Research demonstrates the costs of language barriers in health care to families, health systems, plans and providers, and the government. When people with LEP face language barriers they make medication [dosing errors](#), find it harder to access [cancer care](#), and their children are [more likely](#) to experience adverse events when hospitalized. Doctors [pay millions](#) in medical malpractice claims because of language related communications problems. Patients with LEP have a [higher rate](#) of hospital readmissions. All of these add up to more costs and worse outcomes. This legislation will move us towards a better approach, and we encourage you to support it.

Sincerely,

National Immigration Law Center
Libre Initiative
American Heart Association
American Telemedicine Association

Association for Community Affiliated Plans
Association of Asian Community Health Organizations
Association of Language Companies
ATA Action
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters
Healthcare Leadership Council
HIMSS
Justice in Aging
World Relief