



Access to Diabetic Shoes

Action Requested: Cosponsor S. 800, the Promoting Access to Diabetic Shoes Act in the 117th Congress. This bipartisan legislation would authorize PAs to certify a Medicare patient’s need for diabetic shoes.

PAs diagnose and treat illnesses, manage complex conditions, prescribe medications in all 50 states, and assist in surgery – but the current statute governing Medicare does not authorize PAs to complete the simple task of ordering diabetic shoes. With the aging U.S. population and increasing prevalence of diabetes, it is absurd that a PA can manage a patient’s diabetes and other complex chronic conditions but is not authorized to order diabetic shoes. The Promoting Access to Diabetic Shoes Act will modernize current Medicare policy and authorize PAs to certify a patient’s need for diabetic shoes.

Background: Currently, PAs and nurse practitioners (NPs) can provide and manage the complex care needed to treat their diabetic Medicare patients, however they must send their diabetic Medicare patients who need therapeutic shoes to a physician to certify need. Under current law, the certifying physician must then be the provider treating the patient’s diabetic condition going forward. This can disrupt the care and chronic disease management of a patient who may have been under the care of a PA for years. Delays in treatment caused by this burdensome statute jeopardize the health of patients and cause the Medicare program to incur additional costs by requiring the participation of an additional provider and unnecessary additional in-person visits to healthcare facilities.

A study published in the American Journal of Medicine in 2018 found that PAs perform as well as physicians in the management of diabetes at diagnosis and during four years of follow-up care. PAs are federally recognized primary care providers, and frequently manage care for diabetics who may have multiple comorbidities. Outside of the Medicare program, PAs are able to certify the need for diabetic shoes for their patients. This is an example of the Medicare statute not making common sense or keeping up with how medicine is practiced today.

Modernizing Medicare to authorize PAs to certify a patient’s need for diabetic shoes will improve the quality of care available to diabetic patients. America currently has an aging population and physician shortages in rural and medically underserved areas can make it difficult for seniors to access needed healthcare services. Additionally, cutting down on unnecessary and duplicative visits by patients to healthcare facilities during the ongoing pandemic will help reduce opportunities for spreading COVID-19.

S. 800 is sponsored in the Senate by Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Susan Collins (R-ME). The House version of this legislation from the previous Congress was H.R. 808, and it is expected to be reintroduced in the current Congress.

AAPA Legislative Recommendation: AAPA recommends Congress support S.800, the Promoting Access to Diabetic Shoes Act.

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