



# Press Release

Apr 21, 2025

## Welch Hosts Event on His New Bipartisan, Bicameral Bill to Expand Telehealth

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**BURLINGTON, VT – U.S. Senator Peter Welch (D-Vt.)** today discussed his new bipartisan, bicameral legislation to expand coverage of telehealth services through Medicaid, the [\*Creating Opportunities Now for Necessary and Effective Care Technologies \(CONNECT\) for Health Act\*](#), while visiting the Thayer House in Burlington. Senator Welch was joined at the Thayer House by a clinician from Cathedral Square’s Support and Services at Home (SASH) program, Vermont patients, and health care providers.

“The COVID-19 pandemic proved that telehealth not only works, but is essential,” **Senator Welch said about the *CONNECT for Health Act***. “Rural and underserved areas in Vermont, and across the country, need modern solutions to help get folks connected to care, and increasing telehealth services must be part of the answer. This bipartisan bill takes commonsense steps to bridge that gap and make sure that our policies adapt to the capabilities of our technology.”

The Thayer House is an affordable living community for Vermonters aged 55 and older, and is a SASH program location. SASH is based in more than 140 living communities throughout the state and supports the health of Vermonters who rely on Medicare.



The *CONNECT for Health Act* would make COVID-19 telehealth flexibilities permanent, improve health outcomes, and make it easier for patients to connect with their doctors. Current Medicare telehealth flexibilities will expire on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025, without Congressional action. Telehealth provides essential access to care, with **nearly a quarter** of Americans accessing telehealth monthly. Telemedicine is also on the rise in Vermont, with **92%** of healthcare providers in the state reporting use of audio/video services to provide care to patients in the past 60 days.

See photos from the event below:



“In a rural, northern state such as Vermont, our patients face many barriers that limit their ability to physically reach our offices– lack of transportation, bad weather, back roads, days that get dark early during our long winters. These factors hit our older patients particularly hard. One tool that is helping patients get the care they need is to be able to see us from home using telehealth. The Vermont Medical Society and Vermont Academy of Family Physicians thank Senator Welch for introducing this important legislation and call on Congress to join him in ensuring patients with Medicare can continue to make use of telehealth visits,” **said Anne Morris, MD, family physician, Milton, VT; Board member, Vermont Medical Society and past-president of the Vermont Academy of Family Physicians.**



“Telehealth visits increase our resident’s access to care, are more convenient, and save travel time. Telehealth visits also allow our nurses to participate with residents. This can improve the resident’s understanding of their care and ensures that our staff have an in depth understanding of the care plan,” **said Jessilyn Dolan, RN, a SASH Wellness Nurse.**

“Telehealth is so much easier and I never have to cancel. I can’t do computers very well, so having help from SASH makes it possible to talk to my doctor. I don’t have a car, and it is hard to get a ride to the doctor’s office,” **said Helen Mischik, a resident of Thayer House.**

The *CONNECT for Health Act* is cosponsored by a broad **bipartisan coalition of more than 60 Senators** and is led by Senator Welch and Sens. Brian Schatz (D-Hawai‘i), Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), Mark Warner (D-Va.), Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.), and John Barrasso (R-Wyo.). Companion legislation has been introduced in the House of Representatives. The *CONNECT for Health Act* has the support of **more than 150 organizations**, including the American Medical Association, AARP, American Hospital Association, National Association of Community Health Centers, National Association of Rural Health Clinics, and American Telemedicine Association.

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