



SENIOR HEALTH

ASA, NCCAOM Endorse Acupuncture for Our Seniors Act of 2023

ASA and NCCAOM Advocacy Team

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- U.S. Representatives Judy Chu (D-Calif.) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.) have introduced the Acupuncture for Our Seniors Act of 2023 (H.R. 3133).
- CMS already recognizes the value of acupuncture and began covering services in January 2020. Unfortunately, acupuncturists currently cannot provide these covered services to beneficiaries without supervision.
- The act would increase senior citizens' access to non-invasive, cost-effective care for pain management that so many cannot access due to current supervision requirements.

The American Society of Acupuncturists (ASA) and the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM) commend U.S. Representatives Judy Chu (D-Calif.) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.) for reintroducing the Acupuncture for Our Seniors Act (H.R. 3133), which would authorize the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to recognize qualified acupuncturists as health care providers. Medicare recognition would enable qualified acupuncturists to provide covered services to Medicare beneficiaries, which will soon surpass 80 million Americans.

CMS already recognizes the value of acupuncture and began covering services in January 2020. Unfortunately, because acupuncturists do not have Medicare provider status, they cannot provide these covered services to beneficiaries without supervision. The status quo disrupts the acupuncture service delivery model, as they cannot independently provide services to Medicare beneficiaries, despite their ability to do so for non-Medicare beneficiaries. The resulting access barrier hurts senior

citizens and exacerbates health care inefficiencies.

Research demonstrates that acupuncture is effective in providing high-quality, personalized care that helps individuals manage pain – without opioids and invasive procedures – and embrace preventive and wellness care options. Acupuncturists’ training, expertise and scope of practice enable them to practice independently. The Acupuncture for Our Seniors Act would increase senior citizens’ access to non-invasive, cost-effective care for pain management that so many cannot access due to current supervision requirements.

“Medicare beneficiaries are projected to increase from 63 [million] to 80 million in the next seven years, so this bill is critical in removing barriers to the increasing demand for a safe, non-pharmacological option to pain and improved health,” said Olivia Hsu Friedman, DACM, LAc, ASA chair. “The ASA applauds Representative Judy Chu, Representative Brian Fitzpatrick, and all involved for understanding the need to solve the opioid crisis while also decreasing healthcare costs and improving long-term outcomes.”

The ASA and the NCCAOM support efforts to increase access to acupuncturists. “Obtaining Medicare provider status for acupuncturists is a priority for the ASA and the NCCAOM and we are grateful to Representatives Judy Chu and Brian Fitzpatrick for championing this bill,” added Mina Larson, MS, MBA, CAE, NCCAOM CEO.

The ASA and the NCCAOM will officially launch the profession’s advocacy efforts on May 15, when over 100 acupuncturists will travel to Washington, D.C., to meet with congressional offices in support of the Acupuncture for Our Seniors Act.

Editor's Note: The Acupuncture for Our Seniors Act of 2023 (H.R. 3133) was introduced on May 9, 2023. As of press time, it had not been assigned a bill number. Readers will recall that the Acupuncture for Our Seniors Act of 2021 (H.R. 4803) was unable to progress to a vote by the time the 2021-22 legislative session ended, requiring that the legislation be reintroduced for consideration during the 2023-24 session.

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