



UNITED STATES SENATE
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING
— RANKING MEMBER TIM SCOTT —

Ranking Member Tim Scott, Opening Statement

Hearing: [Click Here: Accessible Federal Technology for People with Disabilities, Older Americans, and Veterans](#)

Date: 7/28/2022

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to the witnesses for being here today. Without any question we look forward to hearing your testimony.

For many of our nation's seniors and people with disabilities, accessing Federal resources and services has been too big of a problem that must be solved. This is especially true for our veterans. And, that's why Sen. Casey and I are working to solve problems with a variety of solutions. And, I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your participation in so many of the efforts to include working with the VA and to improve the website accessibility for disabled veterans and disabled VA employees. We also requested the DOJ comply with reporting requirements regarding improved website accessibility for Americans with disabilities.

In May, I hosted an event to honor our active duty, reserve, and national guard and military personnel, defense contractors, and those who fought in Afghanistan and Iraq. We had nearly 700 attendees at home in Charleston, South Carolina. It was a wonderful event. It was a wonderful way for us to acknowledge the incredible sacrifice. And, those who serve our country should be honored on a consistent basis.

I would like to acknowledge our South Carolina servicemembers, veterans, and those currently stationed at military bases throughout this nation.

One out of four of our veterans have a disability that is consistent with their military service. And, the median age of our veterans is around the age of 65.

Tony Green is a veteran from Charleston, South Carolina who served in the Navy for eight years. Following his military career, he had problems assimilating into civilian life and started suffering severe bouts of depression. He went from living in the comfort of his own home to living in a homeless shelter. Determined to change his life, he reached out to the VA and received treatment for his bipolar disorder. The VA and its telehealth services which he accesses from his phone and laptop to receive care and manage his medication, have made all the difference in the world for Tony. He took advantage of the VA's comprehensive work-therapy program that led him to and job with the Palmetto Goodwill's Ability One program. He went from a food service worker, to cook, to supervisor. Tony is now an assistant project manager in downtown Charleston. He is also the first homeowner in his family.

Telehealth became a Godsend for millions of Americans like Tony, especially our seniors during Covid-19. Patients connected with their doctors even when they were isolated. From March of

2020 through February of 2021, more than 28 million Medicare beneficiaries used telehealth services.

Donna Avett, named the 2021 pharmacist of the year has been providing telehealth education, free of charge, to the residents of Bamberg County, South Carolina, since 2020. In this rural community, where the nearest doctor is twelve miles away; the nearest ER room is half an hour away; and, more that 100 seniors received free tablets for health screenings in chronic disease education, such as diabetes and hypertension.

Seniors use Zoom and the phone. It improved access to healthcare, to doctors, and specialists that they otherwise might not be able to see. South Carolina is a leader in leader in telehealth innovation. The Medical School of South Carolina has one of just two federally recognized telehealth centers of excellence in the nation.

In 2021, I introduced the Telehealth Modernization Act with Sen. Schatz and a bipartisan group including senators Collins and Warnock, which makes telehealth flexibilities permanent even after this pandemic is completely done. Without Congressional action, however, these emergency provisions will end and they will end soon, like in mid-October of this year. For the tens of millions of Medicare beneficiaries and others who rely on telehealth services, that would be tragic.

Federal regulations have not kept up with the technological advancements that we've seen in this country. We must keep telehealth available and accessible for all Americans, including our seniors, our military heroes, and disabled individuals. So that they can take care of themselves and meet the needs they have.

I look forward to learning from today's witnesses. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.