



June 26, 2025

The Honorable Mehmet Oz, M.D.
Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21244

Re: ITEM Coalition Meeting Request to Discuss Pending National Coverage Analysis for Standing Systems in Power Wheelchairs

Dear Administrator Oz:

On behalf of the undersigned members of the Independence Through Enhancement of Medicare and Medicaid (“ITEM”) Coalition, we write to respectfully ***request a meeting with you*** and your colleagues at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (“CMS”) to discuss the status of the long-pending National Coverage Analysis (“NCA”) for standing systems in Group 3 power wheelchairs. We strongly urge CMS to proceed expeditiously with opening this NCA for public comment without further delay. As the 35th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”) approaches on July 26th, we believe there is no better way to celebrate the successes of this landmark law for people with disabilities over the past three and a half decades than for CMS to open this critically important NCA to address the mobility needs of individuals with disabilities.

The ITEM Coalition—comprised of nearly 100 national, nonprofit organizations that seek to improve access to and coverage of assistive devices and technologies that enhance the function of people with disabilities and chronic conditions of all ages—has long advocated for the coverage of standing systems in powered wheelchairs. Standing systems allow individuals who rely on their power wheelchairs for mobility to elevate into a standing position safely, without the need to transfer into another device. For individuals who spend large parts of their day in a seated position, the value of being able to easily elevate into a standing position, bear weight on the lower limbs, allow gravity to aid in metabolic functions, and enable the performance of Mobility Related Activities of Daily Living (“MRADLs”) is well established in the clinical literature. Coverage of standing systems in power wheelchairs would significantly improve the health, function, and quality of life of Medicare beneficiaries with significant mobility disabilities such as spinal cord injury, paralysis, Multiple Sclerosis, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, limb amputation, and other mobility-related conditions.

During President Trump’s first term, the ITEM Coalition submitted a joint National Coverage Determination (“NCD”) request for consideration of Medicare coverage of seat elevation and standing systems in power wheelchairs. The joint NCD was bifurcated by the prior

Administration which issued a landmark NCD in March 2023 covering seat elevation systems—which allow the seated user to elevate or lower their wheelchair seat to facilitate safe transfers from one surface to another and perform MRADLs. CMS did not act upon the standing system request for reconsideration at that time. However, CMS made clear that the standing system NCA request was still pending was considered “complete”—in other words, properly submitted and ready for reconsideration.

The seat elevation coverage decision was warmly embraced by the disability and rehabilitation communities. To date, it has provided this critical function to Medicare beneficiaries who use power wheelchairs as their primary mode of mobility and to assist with performance of MRADLs. However, we remain deeply concerned that our related request for standing systems, remains unresolved, with CMS having yet to initiate the NCA process or provide a timeline for action. Despite the submission of updated clinical evidence and patient population data in 2024, CMS has not offered an opportunity for public comment or transparency on the path forward to date.

After five years of waiting, it is time for this process to finally advance. Power standing systems have been available to individuals with mobility disabilities since the late 1970’s and are covered by the Veterans Administration, several Medicaid programs, workers compensations programs, and some private payers. Yet, Medicare beneficiaries with mobility impairments have been deprived of access to this technology to date. The “sitting-down disease” that you warned about in a 2014 Pioneer Press article is not exclusive to individuals living without disabilities.¹ In fact, for individuals with significant mobility disabilities who are physically unable to stand on their own, the health risks are even greater. Now is the time for Medicare—the largest health care payer in the country—to finally cover power supported standing systems in Group 3 power wheelchairs for beneficiaries who need them.

With a new administration now in place and CMS under your leadership, the ITEM Coalition implores the agency to finally open the pending NCA for power standing systems at your earliest possible opportunity, July 26th being a symbolic date to coincide with the Anniversary of the ADA. Doing so would reaffirm CMS’s commitment to the disability community and align with the values embodied by the ADA. We believe that granting coverage of standing systems in Group 3 power wheelchairs is crucial to help ensure that Medicare beneficiaries with mobility impairments are able to live as independently as possible, maintain and improve their health and function, and perform or participate in MRADLs in their homes.

The ITEM Coalition would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and other appropriate CMS officials to discuss opening this NCA for standing systems in power wheelchairs in greater detail and to share with you perspectives from across the disability, clinical, and rehabilitation communities. We appreciate your consideration of this meeting request and look forward to continuing our work with your office to secure Medicare coverage of standing systems in Group 3 power wheelchairs as soon as possible. Should you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to ITEM Coalition co-coordinators

¹ Murphy, E. (2014, February 27). *Dr. Oz: How to Cure Sitting Down Disease*. Twin Cities Pioneer Press. <https://www.twincities.com/2014/02/27/dr-oz-how-to-cure-sitting-down-disease/> (Accessed June 12, 2025)

Peter.Thomas@PowersLaw.com or Michael.Barnett@PowersLaw.com, or by calling 202-466-6550.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned Members of the ITEM Coalition

Access Ready, Inc.

ACCSES

Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

All Wheels Up

ALS Association*

American Academy of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

American Association for Homecare

American Association of People with Disabilities

American Association on Health and Disability

American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine

American Occupational Therapy Association

American Physical Therapy Association

Amputee Coalition*

Association of Rehabilitation Nurses

Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network

Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation*

Clinician Task Force

CureLGMD2i Foundation

Cure SMA

3DA

Epilepsy Foundation of America

Institute for Matching Person and Technology

International Registry of Rehabilitation Technology Suppliers

Lakeshore Foundation

Muscular Dystrophy Association

National Association for the Advancement of Orthotics and Prosthetics

National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)

National Multiple Sclerosis Society

NCART

RESNA

Rifton Equipment

Spina Bifida Association*

Team Gleason*

Unite 2 Fight Paralysis

United Cerebral Palsy

United Spinal Association*

****Member of the ITEM Coalition Steering Committee***