

# Wigs as Durable Medical Equipment Act

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## **Background**

Many patients living with medical hair loss suffer from a variety of diseases, including cancer. With no known cause or cure, alopecia areata is an autoimmune skin disease affecting approximately 6.8 million Americans, many of whom are children.

Alopecia areata usually starts with one or more small, round, smooth patches on the head and can progress to total scalp hair loss (alopecia totalis) or complete body hair loss (alopecia universalis). This common skin disease is highly unpredictable and cyclical. Hair can grow back in or fall out again at any time, and the disease course is different for each person.

Many individuals affected by alopecia areata utilize cranial prosthetics (or wigs) as there are currently few effective treatment options. Unfortunately, these prosthetics can come with a significant out-of-pocket cost for Americans with low or fixed incomes. This is especially burdensome for children, who often require cranial prosthetics for attending school.

## **Bill Summary**

This bill would provide coverage for wigs as durable medical equipment under the Medicare Program. More specifically, the bill will reclassify cranial prosthetics as durable medical equipment under the Social Security Act. This simple change will grant those in need access to this important treatment option.

This language is critically important in granting increased access to cranial prosthetics and therapies for patients with alopecia areata and other forms of medical hair loss.