

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4150

To improve the provision of health care furnished by the Department of Veterans Affairs for veterans diagnosed with diabetes and heart disease, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 15, 2023

Ms. BROWNLEY introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To improve the provision of health care furnished by the Department of Veterans Affairs for veterans diagnosed with diabetes and heart disease, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Improving Whole
5 Health for Veterans with Chronic Conditions Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

7 It is the sense of Congress that—

8 (1) the Department of Veterans Affairs has pio-
9 neered a whole health approach to health care that

1 provides access to alternative medicines, delivers a
2 holistic approach to health and well-being, and re-
3 peatedly demonstrates better health outcomes than
4 the private sector at a low cost to taxpayers in the
5 United States;

6 (2) the effects of poor dental care are shown to
7 worsen the symptoms of diabetes and heart disease;

8 (3) diabetes and heart disease are shown to in-
9 crease risk of periodontal disease;

10 (4) the combination of diabetes, heart disease,
11 and periodontal disease can be fatal; and

12 (5) to best achieve a whole health model for the
13 provision of health care to veterans with diabetes
14 and heart disease and reduce long-term costs, the
15 Department must furnish preventative and com-
16 prehensive dental care to veterans diagnosed with di-
17 abetes and heart disease.

18 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

19 In this Act:

20 (1) COVERED CARE.—The term “covered care”
21 means dental care that is comprehensive in nature
22 and consistent with the dental services and treat-
23 ment furnished by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs
24 to veterans pursuant to section 1712(a)(1)(G) of
25 title 38, United States Code.

1 (2) COVERED VETERAN.—The term “covered
2 veteran” means a veteran who—

3 (A) is enrolled in the system of annual pa-
4 tient enrollment of the Department of Veterans
5 Affairs established and operated under sub-
6 section (a) of section 1705 of title 38, United
7 States Code, pursuant to paragraph (1) or (2)
8 of such subsection or is not enrolled in such
9 system but is otherwise entitled to hospital care
10 and medical services under subsection (c)(2) of
11 such section;

12 (B) is not eligible for dental services and
13 treatment and related dental appliances under
14 the laws administered by the Secretary of Vet-
15 erans Affairs as of the date of the enactment of
16 this Act; and

17 (C) has a diagnosis of—

18 (i) type 1 or type 2 diabetes; or

19 (ii) ischemic heart disease.

20 **SEC. 4. PILOT PROGRAM TO FURNISH DENTAL CARE FROM**
21 **THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**
22 **TO CERTAIN VETERANS DIAGNOSED WITH DI-**
23 **ABETES OR ISCHEMIC HEART DISEASE.**

24 (a) IN GENERAL.—Commencing not later than one
25 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-

1 retary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a pilot program
2 (in this section referred to as the “pilot program”) under
3 which the Secretary shall furnish covered care to covered
4 veterans for the duration of the pilot program.

5 (b) DURATION.—The pilot program shall be carried
6 out during the four-year period beginning on the date of
7 the commencement of the pilot program.

8 (c) LOCATIONS.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry
10 out the pilot program at the following locations:

11 (A) Each medical center of the Depart-
12 ment with an established dental clinic.

13 (B) Each community-based outpatient clin-
14 ic with an established dental clinic.

15 (2) MOBILE DENTAL CLINICS.—In carrying out
16 the pilot program, the Secretary shall test the effi-
17 cacy of mobile dental clinics to service rural areas
18 that do not have a population base to warrant a full-
19 time clinic but where there are covered veterans in
20 need of dental care.

21 (3) HOME-BASED DENTAL CARE.—In carrying
22 out the pilot program, the Secretary shall test the
23 efficacy of portable dental care units to service rural
24 veteran in their homes, as the Secretary considers
25 medically appropriate.

1 (d) DENTAL THERAPISTS AND TELE-DENTISTRY.—

2 (1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the pilot
3 program, The Secretary shall test the efficacy of the
4 use of dental therapists and tele-dentistry to service
5 the dental care needs of covered veterans.

6 (2) USE OF TELE-DENTISTRY.—When providing
7 tele-dentistry under paragraph (1), the Secretary
8 shall use Federal employees to the maximum extent
9 possible.

10 (e) ADMINISTRATION.—

11 (1) NOTICE TO COVERED VETERANS.—In car-
12 rying out the pilot program, the Secretary shall in-
13 form all covered veterans of the covered care avail-
14 able under the pilot program.

15 (2) COPAYMENTS.—The Secretary may collect
16 copayments for covered care furnished under the
17 pilot program in accordance with authorities on the
18 collection of copayments for medical care of veterans
19 under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code.

20 (f) REPORTS.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days be-
22 fore the completion of the pilot program, and not
23 later than 180 days after the completion of the pilot
24 program, the Secretary shall submit to the Com-
25 mittee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on

1 Armed Services of the Senate and the Committee on
2 Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Armed
3 Services of the House of Representatives a report on
4 the pilot program.

5 (2) CONTENTS.—Each report under paragraph
6 (1) shall include the following:

7 (A) A description of the implementation
8 and operation of the provision of covered care
9 under the pilot program.

10 (B) The number of covered veterans re-
11 ceiving covered care under the pilot program
12 and a description of the covered care furnished
13 to such veterans.

14 (C) An analysis of the costs and benefits
15 of covered care provided under the pilot pro-
16 gram, including a comparison of costs and ben-
17 efits by location type.

18 (D) An assessment of the impact of the
19 pilot program on appointments for care, pre-
20 scriptions, hospitalizations, emergency room vis-
21 its, wellness, employability, satisfaction, and
22 perceived quality of life of covered veterans re-
23 lated to their diagnosis of diabetes or ischemic
24 heart disease.

1 (E) An analysis and assessment of the effi-
2 cacy of mobile clinics and portable dental care
3 units, to the extent such modalities are used, to
4 service the needs of covered veterans under the
5 pilot program.

6 (F) An analysis and assessment of the effi-
7 cacy of dental therapists and tele-dentistry to
8 service the needs of covered veterans under the
9 pilot program, to include a cost benefit analysis
10 of such services.

11 (G) The findings and conclusions of the
12 Secretary with respect to the pilot program.

13 (H) Such recommendations as the Sec-
14 retary considers appropriate for the expansion
15 of dental care to all veterans eligible for health
16 care from the Department.

17 (g) IMPACT ON COMMUNITY CARE.—Nothing in this
18 section limits a covered veteran from accessing care or
19 services pursuant to section 1703 of title 38, United
20 States Code.

1 **SEC. 5. STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM TO**
2 **INCENTIVIZE DENTAL TRAINING AND EN-**
3 **SURE THE DENTAL WORKFORCE OF THE DE-**
4 **PARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

5 (a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Vet-
6 erans Affairs, to ensure that the Department of Veterans
7 Affairs has sufficient staff to provide covered care to cov-
8 ered veterans, shall implement a loan reimbursement pro-
9 gram for qualified dentists, dental hygienists, and oral
10 surgeons who agree—

11 (1) to be appointed by the Secretary as a den-
12 tist, dental hygienist, or oral surgeon, as the case
13 may be, under section 7401 of title 38, United
14 States Code; and

15 (2) to serve as a dentist, dental hygienist, or
16 oral surgeon, as the case may be, of the Department
17 pursuant to such appointment at a dental clinic of
18 the Department selected under subsection (c) for a
19 period that is not less than the duration of the pilot
20 program under section 4.

21 (b) MAXIMUM AMOUNT.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in para-
23 graph (2), the Secretary may reimburse not more
24 than—

25 (A) \$100,000 for each dentist participating
26 in the program under subsection (a);

1 (B) \$25,000 for each dental hygienist par-
2 ticipating in such program; and

3 (C) \$40,000 for each credentialed doctor of
4 medicine in dentistry serving as an oral surgeon
5 and participating in such program.

6 (2) DUAL ELIGIBILITY.—The Secretary may re-
7 imburse an individual serving in multiple positions
8 described in subparagraphs (A) through (C) of para-
9 graph (1) not more than \$140,000.

10 (c) SELECTION OF LOCATIONS.—The Secretary shall
11 monitor demand among covered veterans for covered care
12 and require participants in the program under subsection
13 (a) to choose from dental clinics of the Department with
14 the greatest need for dentists, dental hygienists, or oral
15 surgeons, as the case may be, according to facility enroll-
16 ment and patient demand.

17 **SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

18 (a) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appro-
19 priated for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal
20 year 2024 such sums as may be necessary to carry out
21 this Act.

22 (b) AVAILABILITY.—The amount authorized to be ap-
23 propriated under subsection (a) shall be available for obli-

1 gation for the eight-year period beginning on the date that
2 is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

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