

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2259

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to establish community integration network infrastructure for services for veterans, to require the collection from veterans of information related to social determinants of health, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 12, 2023

Mr. SULLIVAN (for himself and Ms. HASSAN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to establish community integration network infrastructure for services for veterans, to require the collection from veterans of information related to social determinants of health, 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 “Leveraging Integrated
5 Networks in Communities for Veterans Act” or the
6 “LINC VA Act”.

- 1 (iv) transportation;
2 (v) job training;
3 (vi) child development or care;
4 (vii) caregiving and respite care;
5 (viii) disability assistance; and
6 (ix) other services, as determined by
7 the Secretary;

8 (B) prioritizes connectivity with appro-
9 priate existing technology networks developed
10 by public or private organizations that comply
11 with, as applicable, standards adopted by the
12 Secretary of Health and Human Services under
13 section 3004 of the Public Health Service Act
14 (42 U.S.C. 300jj-14), for the purposes de-
15 scribed in subparagraph (A); and

16 (C) ensures that—

17 (i) reasonable measures are taken to
18 promote connectivity and interoperable ex-
19 change among covered entities; and

20 (ii) appropriate privacy and security
21 protections are in place, in accordance with
22 applicable Federal and State privacy laws;

23 (2) connect covered entities for purposes of
24 communication, service coordination and consumer

1 assistance, referral and capacity management, out-
2 come tracking and reporting, and related services;

3 (3) provide technical assistance and support
4 covered entities in connecting and participating in
5 the community integration network infrastructure;

6 (4) collect information from veterans served
7 under the pilot program regarding social deter-
8 minants of health using a standardized risk assess-
9 ment or screening tool, which shall include standard-
10 ized definitions for identifying social determinants of
11 health needs identified in the ICD–10 diagnostic
12 codes Z55 through Z63, Z65, and Z75 (as in effect
13 on the date of enactment of this Act) that incor-
14 porate measures for quantifying the relative severity
15 of any such social determinant of health need identi-
16 fied in a veteran; and

17 (5) incorporate screenings used to collect infor-
18 mation under paragraph (4) into routine care pro-
19 vided to veterans under the laws administered by the
20 Secretary.

21 (c) LOCATIONS.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans
23 Affairs shall carry out the pilot program under sub-
24 section (a) at not fewer than one facility of the De-

1 department of Veterans Affairs in each Veterans Inte-
2 grated Service Network of the Department.

3 (2) VARIETY OF FACILITIES.—In selecting fa-
4 cilities under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall en-
5 sure the selection of a variety of different types of
6 facilities, including—

7 (A) frontier facilities;

8 (B) under-resourced facilities; and

9 (C) facilities at which there are existing ef-
10 forts to coordinate with community resources.

11 (d) COORDINATION AND INTEGRATION OF PRO-
12 GRAMS.—

13 (1) COORDINATION WITH EXISTING NET-
14 WORKS.—In carrying out the pilot program under
15 subsection (a), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs
16 shall coordinate with existing community networks.

17 (2) COORDINATION AND INTEGRATION WITH
18 STATE MEDICAID PROGRAMS.—The Secretary of
19 Health and Human Services, in consultation with
20 the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, shall issue guid-
21 ance to States that includes options for State Med-
22 icaid programs to coordinate and integrate medical
23 assistance provided under a State plan or waiver
24 under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42
25 U.S.C. 1396a et seq.) with services for veterans pro-

1 vided under the pilot program under subsection (a),
2 as well as a template for States to use to request or
3 modify Medicaid waiver authority under section
4 1115 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1315)
5 for such purpose.

6 (e) TRACKING OF REFERRALS.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans
8 Affairs shall track—

9 (A) the accuracy of referrals of veterans to
10 community networks under the pilot program
11 under subsection (a);

12 (B) the response time of providers to
13 which such veterans are referred; and

14 (C) the outcome of the initial meeting by
15 a veteran and the provider to which the veteran
16 is referred.

17 (2) FORM.—The Secretary may track the infor-
18 mation required under paragraph (1) in any medium
19 determined appropriate by the Secretary.

20 (f) REPORT.—Not later than three years after
21 amounts are first appropriated to carry out to carry out
22 the pilot program under subsection (a), the Secretary of
23 Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report indi-
24 cating the social service needs of veterans reflected by the
25 use of services under the community integration network

1 infrastructure established under the pilot program under
2 subsection (a), including an assessment of—

3 (1) the need for services that is being met
4 through such infrastructure; and

5 (2) the need for services that is not being met
6 through such infrastructure.

7 (g) COMPTROLLER GENERAL EVALUATION, REPORT,
8 AND RECOMMENDATIONS.—

9 (1) EVALUATION.—The Comptroller General of
10 the United States shall conduct an evaluation that
11 measures the overall impact of the community inte-
12 gration network infrastructure established under the
13 pilot program under subsection (a) with respect to—

14 (A) changes in individual and population
15 health outcomes among veterans;

16 (B) changes in access to health care or so-
17 cial services among veterans; and

18 (C) such other factors as the Comptroller
19 General considers appropriate.

20 (2) REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS.—

21 (A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than four
22 years after the date of the enactment of this
23 Act, the Comptroller General shall—

24 (i) submit to Congress a report on the
25 evaluation conducted under paragraph (1);

1 (ii) make such report publicly avail-
2 able; and

3 (iii) based on such evaluation, make
4 recommendations to the Secretary of Vet-
5 erans Affairs on how to improve and sus-
6 tain community integration network infra-
7 structure established under the pilot pro-
8 gram under subsection (a).

9 (B) ELEMENTS OF REPORT.—The report
10 under subparagraph (A)(i) shall include data
11 on—

12 (i) what resources under the pilot pro-
13 gram under subsection (a) are being uti-
14 lized the most;

15 (ii) what requests for services under
16 the pilot program cannot be met; and

17 (iii) the impact of the provision of
18 services under the pilot program on health
19 outcomes of veterans.

20 (h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

21 (1) COMMUNITY INTEGRATION NETWORK IN-
22 FRASTRUCTURE.—The term “community integration
23 network infrastructure” means infrastructure used
24 to enable the coordination, alignment, and connec-
25 tion of covered entities for purposes of communica-

1 tion, service coordination, and referral management
2 of services, with respect to services such as—

3 (A) nutritional assistance;

4 (B) housing;

5 (C) health care, including preventive health
6 intervention, chronic disease management, and
7 behavioral health care;

8 (D) transportation;

9 (E) job training;

10 (F) child development or care;

11 (G) caregiving and respite care;

12 (H) disability assistance; and

13 (I) other services, as determined by the
14 Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

15 (2) COVERED ENTITY.—The term “covered en-
16 tity” means any—

17 (A) community-based organization that ac-
18 cepts referrals from health care organizations
19 and that provides services such as—

20 (i) nutritional assistance;

21 (ii) housing;

22 (iii) health care, including preventive
23 health intervention, chronic disease man-
24 agement, and behavioral health care;

25 (iv) transportation;

- 1 (v) job training;
- 2 (vi) child development or care;
- 3 (vii) caregiving and respite care; and
- 4 (viii) disability assistance;
- 5 (B) public or private health care provider
- 6 organization;
- 7 (C) public or private funded payor of
- 8 health care services, including home- or commu-
- 9 nity-based services;
- 10 (D) State, local, territorial, or Tribal
- 11 health and social services agency;
- 12 (E) State public housing authority or
- 13 housing finance agency;
- 14 (F) public health information exchange or
- 15 public health information network, as defined
- 16 by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; or
- 17 (G) other similar entity, as determined by
- 18 the Secretary.

19 (3) STATE.—The term “State” means a State,

20 territory, or the District of Columbia.

21 **SEC. 3. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION FROM VETERANS**

22 **RELATED TO SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF**

23 **HEALTH.**

24 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs

25 shall collect from veterans enrolled in the system of annual

1 patient enrollment of the Department of Veterans Affairs
2 established and operated under section 1705(a) of title 38,
3 United States Code, as part of routine screenings of such
4 veterans under the laws administered by the Secretary, in-
5 formation related to social determinants that may factor
6 into the health of such veterans.

7 (b) SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH.—The in-
8 formation collected under subsection (a) shall include
9 standardized definitions for identifying social deter-
10 minants of health needs identified in the ICD–10 diag-
11 nostic codes Z55 through Z63, Z65, and Z75 (as in effect
12 on the date of enactment of this Act). Such definitions
13 shall incorporate measures for quantifying the relative se-
14 verity of any such social determinant of health need identi-
15 fied in an individual.

16 **SEC. 4. IMPLEMENTATION.**

17 In implementing this Act, the Secretary of Veterans
18 Affairs shall consider data privacy and how to prevent
19 data blocking and promote interoperability.

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