

Improving Whole Health for Veterans with Chronic Conditions Act

Sec. 1: Short Title

Sec. 2: Sense of Congress

- (1) the Department of Veterans Affairs has pioneered a whole health approach to health care that provides access to alternative medicines, delivers a holistic approach to health and well-being, and repeatedly demonstrates better health outcomes than the private sector at a low cost to taxpayers in the United States;
- (2) the effects of poor dental care are shown to worsen the symptoms of diabetes and heart disease;
- (3) diabetes and heart disease are shown to increase the risk of periodontal disease;
- (4) the combination of diabetes, heart disease, and periodontal disease can be fatal; and
- (5) to best achieve a whole health model for the provision of health care to veterans with diabetes and heart disease and reduce long-term costs, the Department must furnish preventative and comprehensive dental care to veterans diagnosed with diabetes and heart disease.

Sec. 3: Definitions

- (1) Veterans shall receive the same care afforded to veterans with a 100% service-connected disability rating.
- (2) A covered veteran is a veteran eligible for health care at the VA, is not eligible for dental care, and has a diagnosis of type 1 or type 2 diabetes or ischemic heart disease.

Sec. 4: Pilot Program to furnish dental care from the Department of Veterans Affairs to veterans diagnosed with diabetes or ischemic heart disease.

- (a) The Secretary shall start a pilot program to provide dental care to veterans.
- (b) The pilot shall be four years long.
- (c) The pilot shall be carried out at all VA facilities with a dental clinic.
 - The Secretary shall test the efficacy of mobile dental clinics.
 - The Secretary shall test the efficacy of portable dental clinics.
- (d) The Secretary shall test the efficacy of dental therapists and teledentistry.
- (e) The Secretary shall inform all covered veterans of their eligibility to participate in the pilot.
 - The Secretary may collect copayments for care covered under the pilot.
- (f) The Secretary shall submit a report to Congress on the impact of the expansion of dental care and its findings on tested methodologies.
- (g) MISSION Act wait and drive time standards apply to veterans seeking care under the pilot.

Sec. 4: Student Loan Repayment

- (a) To ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs has sufficient staff to provide dental service to veterans, the VA shall implement a loan reimbursement program for qualified dental care professionals that agree to serve as a dentist of the Department for the duration of the pilot at a location deemed of high need by the Secretary.

(b) The maximum reimbursement amount is \$100,000 per dentist, \$40,000 per oral surgeon, and 25,000 per dental hygienist participating in the program, or a cap of \$140,000 for participants of a dual degree.

(c) Locations chosen by the Secretary shall be those with the greatest need.

Sec. 5: Appropriations

(a) The funds necessary for this act will be made available for a period of eight years