116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. ______

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a grant program to expand and improve the provision of telehealth services to veterans.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mrs. Lee of Nevada introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on ________________________

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a grant program to expand and improve the provision of telehealth services to veterans.

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 “VA Telehealth Expansion Act”.

(Original Signature of Member)
SEC. 2. GRANT PROGRAM TO EXPAND TELEHEALTH FROM
      DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

      (a) In General.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
shall enter into partnerships, and expand existing partner-
ships, with entities that represent or serve veterans, non-
profit organizations, private businesses, and other inter-
ested parties for the expansion of telehealth capabilities
and the provision of telehealth services to veterans
through the award of grants under subsection (c). Such
telehealth services shall be provided by health care pro-
viders of the Department of Veterans Affairs or through
the Veterans Community Care Program under section
1703 of title 38, United States Code.

      (b) Preference.—When selecting entities with
which to enter into or to expand a partnership under sub-
section (a), the Secretary shall give preference to entities
that—

      (1) represent veterans in rural or highly rural
areas (as determined through the use of the Rural-
Urban Commuting Areas coding system of the De-
partment of Agriculture); or

      (2) operate in a medically underserved commu-
nity (as defined in section 799B of the Public
Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 295p)).

      (c) Award of Grants.—
(1) **IN GENERAL.**—In carrying out partnerships entered into or expanded under this section with entities described in subsection (a), the Secretary shall award grants to those entities.

(2) **MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF GRANTS.**—The amount of a grant awarded under this subsection may not exceed $75,000 in one year.

(3) **USE OF GRANTS.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Grants awarded to an entity under this subsection may be used for one or more of the following:

(i) Purchasing or upgrading hardware or software necessary for the provision of secure and private telehealth services.

(ii) Upgrading security protocols for consistency with the security requirements of the Department.

(iii) Training of employees, including payment of those employees for completing that training, with respect to—

(I) military and veteran cultural competence, if the entity is not an organization that represents veterans;
(II) appropriate processes for handling emergencies that occur during telehealth;

(III) equipment required to provide telehealth services; or

(IV) any other unique training needs for the provision of telehealth services to veterans.

(iv) Upgrading existing infrastructure owned or leased by the entity to make rooms more conducive to telehealth care, including—

(I) additions or modifications to windows or walls in an existing room, or other alterations as needed to create a new, private room;

(II) soundproofing of an existing room;

(III) new electrical or internet outlets in an existing room; or

(IV) aesthetic or other enhancements to establish a more suitable therapeutic environment.

(v) Upgrading existing infrastructure to comply with the Americans with Disabil-
ities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.).

(vi) Upgrading infrastructure or internet services.

(B) Exclusion.—Grants may not be used for the purchase of new property or for major construction projects, as determined by the Secretary.

(d) Agreement on Telehealth Access Points.—

(1) In general.—An entity described in subsection (a) that seeks to establish a telehealth access point for veterans but does not require grant funding under this section to do so may enter into an agreement with the Department for the establishment of such an access point.

(2) Inspection to determine adequacy of facilities.—The Secretary shall inspect any such access point to determine whether the access point is private, secure, and accessible to veterans.

(e) Assessment of Barriers to Access.—

(1) In general.—Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall complete an assessment of barriers faced by veterans in accessing telehealth services.
(2) **ELEMENTS.**—The assessment required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) An assessment of current and potential future barriers, including—

(i) cost;

(ii) access to broadband internet infrastructure and technology;

(iii) digital competency; and

(iv) discrimination (including cultural, language, or medical discrimination).

(B) A description of how the Secretary plans to address the barriers described in subparagraph (A).

(C) Such other matters related access by veterans to telehealth while not on property of the Department the Secretary determines relevant.

(3) **REPORT.**—Not later than 120 days after the completion of the assessment required by paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the assessment, including any recommendations for legislative or administrative action based on the results of the assessment.