



(Original Signature of Member)

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 Expan-
5 sion Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. GRANT PROGRAM TO EXPAND TELEHEALTH FROM**
2 **DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
4 shall enter into partnerships, and expand existing partner-
5 ships, with entities that represent or serve veterans, non-
6 profit organizations, private businesses, and other inter-
7 ested parties for the expansion of telehealth capabilities
8 and the provision of telehealth services to veterans
9 through the award of grants under subsection (c). Such
10 telehealth services shall be provided by health care pro-
11 viders of the Department of Veterans Affairs or through
12 the Veterans Community Care Program under section
13 1703 of title 38, United States Code.

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

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

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

25 (c) AWARD OF GRANTS.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out partnerships
2 entered into or expanded under this section with en-
3 tities described in subsection (a), the Secretary shall
4 award grants to those entities.

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

8 (3) USE OF GRANTS.—

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

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

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

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

21 (I) military and veteran cultural
22 competence, if the entity is not an or-
23 ganization that represents veterans;

1 (II) appropriate processes for
2 handling emergencies that occur dur-
3 ing telehealth;

4 (III) equipment required to pro-
5 vide telehealth services; or

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

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

13 (I) additions or modifications to
14 windows or walls in an existing room,
15 or other alterations as needed to cre-
16 ate a new, private room;

17 (II) soundproofing of an existing
18 room;

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

21 (IV) aesthetic or other enhance-
22 ments to establish a more suitable
23 therapeutic environment.

24 (v) Upgrading existing infrastructure
25 to comply with the Americans with Disabil-

1 ities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et
2 seq.).

3 (vi) Upgrading infrastructure or inter-
4 net services.

5 (B) EXCLUSION.—Grants may not be used
6 for the purchase of new property or for major
7 construction projects, as determined by the Sec-
8 retary.

9 (d) AGREEMENT ON TELEHEALTH ACCESS
10 POINTS.—

11 (1) IN GENERAL.—An entity described in sub-
12 section (a) that seeks to establish a telehealth access
13 point for veterans but does not require grant fund-
14 ing under this section to do so may enter into an
15 agreement with the Department for the establish-
16 ment of such an access point.

17 (2) INSPECTION TO DETERMINE ADEQUACY OF
18 FACILITIES.—The Secretary shall inspect any such
19 access point to determine whether the access point
20 is private, secure, and accessible to veterans.

21 (e) ASSESSMENT OF BARRIERS TO ACCESS.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 18 months
23 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
24 retary shall complete an assessment of barriers faced
25 by veterans in accessing telehealth services.

1 (2) ELEMENTS.—The assessment required by
2 paragraph (1) shall include the following:

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

5 (i) cost;

6 (ii) access to broadband internet in-
7 frastructure and technology;

8 (iii) digital competency; and

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

11 (B) A description of how the Secretary
12 plans to address the barriers described in sub-
13 paragraph (A).

14 (C) Such other matters related access by
15 veterans to telehealth while not on property of
16 the Department the Secretary determines rel-
17 evant.

18 (3) REPORT.—Not later than 120 days after
19 the completion of the assessment required by para-
20 graph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the Com-
21 mittee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the
22 Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of
23 Representatives a report on the assessment, includ-
24 ing any recommendations for legislative or adminis-
25 trative action based on the results of the assessment.