

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 6208

To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide administrative support to providers of dental care who provide such care to veterans that is not furnished under such title, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a pilot program for the provision of dental care to certain veterans, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 9, 2021

Mr. BILIRAKIS (for himself, Mr. LEVIN of California, Mr. WALTZ, Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN, and Mr. ZELDIN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide administrative support to providers of dental care who provide such care to veterans that is not furnished under such title, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a pilot program for the provision of dental care to certain veterans, 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Veterans Early Treat-
3 ment for Chronic Ailment Resurgence through Examina-
4 tions Act of 2021” or the “VET CARE Act of 2021”.

5 **SEC. 2. ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY PRO-**
6 **VIDERS OF DENTAL CARE.**

7 Section 1712 of title 38, United States Code, is
8 amended—

9 (1) by redesignating subsections (d) and (e) as
10 subsections (e) and (f), respectively; and

11 (2) by inserting after subsection (c) the fol-
12 lowing new subsection (d):

13 “(d)(1) The Secretary may furnish, to a provider of
14 dental care described in paragraph (2), administrative
15 support (including information for the provider to share
16 with veterans regarding the dental insurance plan under
17 section 1712C of this title) related to dental care described
18 in paragraph (2).

19 “(2) Dental care described in this paragraph is—

20 “(A) provided to a veteran;

21 “(B) not furnished under a law administered by
22 the Secretary; and”.

23 **SEC. 3. PILOT PROGRAM FOR THE PROVISION OF DENTAL**
24 **CARE TO CERTAIN VETERANS.**

25 (a) **PILOT PROGRAM.**—The Secretary of Veterans Af-
26 fairs shall carry out a pilot program to provide outpatient

1 dental services and treatment, and related dental appli-
2 cations, to eligible veterans enrolled under subsection (c)(3),
3 at no cost to such veterans. Under the pilot program, the
4 Secretary shall determine whether there is a correlation
5 between veterans receiving such services and treatment,
6 and the veterans suffering fewer complications of chronic
7 ailments, thereby yielding a lower cost of care.

8 (b) ELIGIBLE VETERAN DEFINED.—For purposes of
9 this section, the term “eligible veteran” means a veteran
10 who—

11 (1) is enrolled in the system of annual patient
12 enrollment under section 1705 of title 38, United
13 States Code;

14 (2) is not eligible for dental care under section
15 1712 of title 38, United States Code;

16 (3) the Secretary determines does not receive
17 regular periodontal care;

18 (4) is between 40 and 70 years of age; and

19 (5) has been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

20 (c) APPLICATION; EVALUATION; DISQUALIFICATION;
21 ENROLLMENT; CATEGORIZATION.—

22 (1) APPLICATION.—An eligible veteran may
23 elect to apply for the pilot program.

24 (2) EVALUATION; DISQUALIFICATION.—An eli-
25 gible veteran who applies for the pilot program shall

1 receive an initial periodontal evaluation, including
2 vertical bitewing radiographs. Any eligible veteran
3 diagnosed with periodontal disease that requires sur-
4 gery shall be disqualified from the pilot program.

5 (3) ENROLLMENT; CATEGORIZATION.—The Sec-
6 retary shall enroll at least 1,500 eligible veterans
7 who apply for the pilot program, giving preference to
8 veterans with service-connected disabilities that in-
9 creases in accordance with the veterans' disability
10 ratings under chapter 11 of title 38, United States
11 Code, in a manner that ensures the following:

12 (A) One-third of eligible veterans enrolled
13 in the pilot program shall have been diagnosed
14 with no or mild periodontitis under paragraph
15 (2).

16 (B) Two-thirds of eligible veterans enrolled
17 in the pilot program shall have been diagnosed
18 with moderate to severe periodontitis under
19 paragraph (2).

20 (d) DURATION OF PROGRAM.—The Secretary shall
21 carry out the pilot program during the four-year period
22 beginning on the date that is 180 days after the effective
23 date of this section.

24 (e) LOCATIONS.—The pilot program shall be carried
25 out in five facilities of the Veterans Health Administra-

1 tion, with one such facility in each of five Veterans Inte-
2 grated Services Networks that the Secretary considers ap-
3 propriate for the pilot program.

4 (f) PATIENT DISTRIBUTION.—Each facility shall
5 serve not more than one-fourth and not fewer than one-
6 sixth of the veterans enrolled in the pilot program, in ap-
7 proximately even proportions of veterans categorized
8 under subsection (c)(3).

9 (g) COURSE OF PROGRAM.—

10 (1) PERIODONTAL THERAPY.—The Secretary
11 shall make timely and appropriate periodontal ther-
12 apy available to veterans described in subsection
13 (c)(3)(B).

14 (2) ELECTION OF TREATMENT.—Such veterans
15 who elect to receive treatment shall be classified as
16 “treated”.

17 (3) ANNUAL EVALUATIONS.—Each treated vet-
18 eran shall receive an annual dental evaluation, dur-
19 ing which the periodontal health of the treated vet-
20 eran shall be reassessed and recorded exactly as at
21 the initial evaluation under subsection (c)(2).

22 (4) HEALTH OUTCOME REPORTING.—For the
23 duration of the pilot program, the Secretary shall
24 collect and record data regarding the health of treat-
25 ed veterans, including events, treatments, and out-

1 comes, and make such data available for analysis by
2 qualified researchers.

3 (h) EDUCATION.—

4 (1) HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS.—The Secretary
5 shall provide standardized instructions to all physi-
6 cians and dentists who work in facilities described in
7 subsection (e) to ensure consistent evaluation and
8 care for veterans enrolled in the pilot program in all
9 such facilities.

10 (2) ENROLLED VETERANS.—The Secretary
11 shall provide each veteran enrolled in the pilot pro-
12 gram with an orientation, information before any
13 care is provided under the pilot program, and an
14 exit interview that includes information regarding
15 how such veteran may obtain dental services and
16 treatment after the end of the pilot program.

17 (i) EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH.—The Secretary shall
18 notify those institutions of higher education (as that term
19 is defined in section 102 of the Higher Education Act of
20 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002)) that offer degrees in periodontolo-
21 gy of the pilot program so that such institutions may en-
22 gage in similar studies regarding private periodontal care
23 for veterans.

1 (j) REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the
2 conclusion of the pilot program, the Secretary shall submit
3 a report of findings to the Congress.

4 (k) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary shall administer
5 the pilot program under such regulations as the Secretary
6 shall prescribe, including best practices regarding in-
7 formed consent and study registration.

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