

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2505

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to utilize tele-health platforms to assist in the treatment of veterans living in rural areas who suffer from post traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 19, 2009

Mr. TEAGUE introduced the following bill; which was referred to the
Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to utilize tele-health platforms to assist in the treatment of veterans living in rural areas who suffer from post traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury.

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 “Reaching Rural Vet-
5 erans through Telehealth Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING NEED TO USE**
2 **TELE-HEALTH PLATFORMS IN TREATING**
3 **VETERANS LIVING IN RURAL AREAS SUFFERING FROM POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DIS-**
4 **ORDER OR TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY.**

6 It is the sense of Congress that—

7 (1) members of the Armed Forces serving in
8 Iraq or Afghanistan are being exposed to conditions
9 in combat operations that increase the risk of the
10 members developing post-traumatic stress disorder
11 or incurring a traumatic brain injury;

12 (2) veterans living in rural areas need better ac-
13 cess to treatments for post-traumatic stress disorder
14 and traumatic brain injury; and

15 (3) the use of tele-health platforms in the treat-
16 ment of post-traumatic stress disorder and trau-
17 matic brain injury can reduce the need for travel by
18 providers and veterans and their families, thereby
19 also reducing costs, time, stress, and other factors
20 associated with travel.

21 **SEC. 3. TELE-HEALTH PILOT PROJECT FOR TREATMENT OF**
22 **VETERANS LIVING IN RURAL AREAS WHO**
23 **SUFFER FROM POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DIS-**
24 **ORDER OR TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY.**

25 (a) PILOT PROJECT.—The Secretary of Veterans Af-
26 fairs shall award grants for the establishment three pilot

1 projects to use tele-health platforms to work, in collabora-
2 tion with State behavioral health systems, other Federal
3 agencies, and other entities as applicable, to serve the
4 needs of veterans living in rural areas who suffer from
5 post traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury.
6 Utilizing tele-health platforms, the pilot projects shall pro-
7 vide treatment, education, and evaluation to veterans who
8 suffer from post traumatic stress disorder or traumatic
9 brain injury and support to their families.

10 (b) TELE-HEALTH PLATFORM DEFINED.—The term
11 “tele-health platform” means the use of electronic infor-
12 mation and telecommunications technologies to support
13 long-distance clinical health care, patient and professional
14 health-related education, public health, and health admin-
15 istration.

16 (c) PROJECT GOALS.—

17 (1) EDUCATION.—Education efforts under the
18 pilot projects shall be designed to teach primary care
19 providers how to diagnosis and manage clients with
20 post traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain in-
21 jury, be standardized and replicable using validated
22 tools, and require ongoing evaluation and improve-
23 ment of the education and training in diagnosis and
24 treatment.

1 (2) TREATMENT.—Treatment efforts under the
2 pilot projects shall be designed to be comprehensive
3 and accessible to veterans on a 24-hour basis, 7 days
4 a week, 365 days a year.

5 (d) PROVIDER PARTICIPATION.—Participation in the
6 pilot projects shall be multi-disciplinary and broad-based,
7 including medical clinicians, trainers, educators, research-
8 ers, community members, and other interested persons.

9 (e) GRANT REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary shall se-
10 lect grant recipients on the basis of the following:

11 (1) Geographical diversity.

12 (2) Reaching the most possible veterans not
13 currently receiving treatment for post traumatic
14 stress disorder or traumatic brain injury.

15 (3) Creating programs in Veteran Integrated
16 Service Networks that are designated by the Sec-
17 retary to be “rural” or “highly rural”.

18 (f) ALLOWABLE USES OF FUNDS.—

19 (1) TRAINING.—Grant funds may be used for
20 training practitioners, therapists, psychologists, psy-
21 chiatrists, case managers, and other professionals to
22 treat veterans suffering from post traumatic stress
23 disorder or traumatic brain injury, including a focus
24 on teaching primary care providers to diagnosis and
25 manage patients with post traumatic stress disorder.

1 (2) RESEARCH.—Grant funds may be used for
2 testing a variety of clinical and case management
3 modalities to provide “Best Practice” treatment for
4 specific populations, such as veterans who served in
5 a regular component of the Armed Forces, veterans
6 who served in reserve components, female military
7 personnel, children of military personnel, parents,
8 and other significant others.

9 (3) PURCHASING.—Grant funds may be used
10 for purchasing equipment related to tele-health plat-
11 forms, such as monitors, speakers, webcams, and
12 necessary software.

13 (4) ORGANIZATION OF PROJECTS.—Grant re-
14 cipients may partner and contract with local commu-
15 nity groups that are already providing services in a
16 rural area, such as parenting, sexual assault preven-
17 tion and recovery services, domestic violence preven-
18 tion and recovery services, food banks, and other so-
19 cial services. Grant funds may be used to provide
20 stipends to clinicians and providers involved in a
21 pilot project.

22 (g) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—Grant recipients
23 shall provide a quarterly report to the Secretary that will
24 include the following:

25 (1) Results under the pilot project involved.

- 1 (2) Number of veterans treated.
- 2 (3) Individual client progress.
- 3 (4) Demonstrative service coordination.
- 4 (5) Client demographics.
- 5 (6) Outcomes and information that can be
- 6 shared with local, State, and Federal government
- 7 agencies.

