

117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 1448

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## AN ACT

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program on dog training therapy, and to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide service dogs to veterans with mental illnesses who do not have mobility impairments.

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 “Puppies Assisting  
3 Wounded Servicemembers for Veterans Therapy Act” or  
4 the “PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act”.

5 **SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS PILOT PRO-**  
6 **GRAM ON DOG TRAINING THERAPY.**

7       (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the  
8 date of the enactment of the Act, the Secretary of Vet-  
9 erans Affairs shall commence the conduct of a pilot pro-  
10 gram to provide canine training to eligible veterans diag-  
11 nosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (in this section  
12 referred to as “PTSD”) as an element of a complementary  
13 and integrative health program for such veterans.

14       (b) DURATION; MEDICAL CENTERS.—

15           (1) DURATION.—The Secretary shall carry out  
16 the pilot program under subsection (a) for a 5-year  
17 period beginning on the date of the commencement  
18 of the pilot program.

19           (2) MEDICAL CENTERS.—The Secretary shall  
20 ensure that such pilot program is carried out by not  
21 fewer than five medical centers of the Department of  
22 Veterans Affairs located in geographically diverse  
23 areas.

24       (c) AGREEMENTS WITH ENTITIES.—In carrying out  
25 the pilot program under subsection (a), the Secretary shall  
26 seek to enter into agreements with nongovernmental enti-

1 ties that the Secretary determines have the demonstrated  
2 ability to provide the canine training specified in sub-  
3 section (a).

4 (d) REQUIRED CONDITIONS.—The Secretary shall in-  
5 clude in any agreement under subsection (c) conditions re-  
6 quiring that the nongovernmental entity seeking to enter  
7 into the agreement—

8 (1) submits to the Secretary certification that  
9 the entity is an accredited service dog training orga-  
10 nization;

11 (2) agrees to ensure that veterans participating  
12 in the pilot program under subsection (a) receive  
13 training from certified service dog training instruc-  
14 tors for a period of time determined appropriate by  
15 the entity;

16 (3) agrees to ensure that veterans participating  
17 in such pilot program are prohibited from having ac-  
18 cess to a dog under such pilot program at any time  
19 during such participation without the supervision of  
20 a certified service dog training instructor;

21 (4) agrees to ensure that veterans participating  
22 in such pilot program receive training in skills  
23 unique to the needs of the veteran to address or al-  
24 leviate PTSD symptoms of the veteran;

1           (5) agrees not to use shock collars or prong col-  
2       lars as training tools and to use positive reinforce-  
3       ment training; and

4           (6) agrees to provide any follow-up training  
5       support specified in subsection (e)(2), as applicable.

6       (e) ADOPTION OF DOG.—

7           (1) IN GENERAL.—A veteran who has partici-  
8       pated in the pilot program under subsection (a) may  
9       adopt a dog that the veteran assisted in training  
10      during such pilot program if the veteran and the vet-  
11      eran’s health provider (in consultation with the enti-  
12      ty that provided the canine training with respect to  
13      the dog under such pilot program) determine that it  
14      is in the best interest of the veteran.

15          (2) FOLLOW-UP TRAINING SUPPORT.—If a vet-  
16      eran adopts a dog under paragraph (1), the entity  
17      that provided the canine training with respect to the  
18      dog under the pilot program shall provide follow-up  
19      training support for the life of the dog. Such sup-  
20      port shall include the provision of a contact plan be-  
21      tween the veteran and the entity that enables the  
22      veteran to seek and receive assistance from the enti-  
23      ty to ensure the dog is being properly cared for.

24      (f) ELIGIBILITY FOR OTHER CARE AND TREAT-  
25      MENT.—Participation in the pilot program under sub-

1 section (a) may not preclude a veteran from receiving any  
2 other medical care or treatment for PTSD furnished by  
3 the Department, including therapy, for which the veteran  
4 is otherwise eligible.

5 (g) COLLECTION OF DATA.—In carrying out this sec-  
6 tion, the Secretary shall—

7 (1) develop metrics and other appropriate  
8 means to measure, with respect to veterans partici-  
9 pating in the pilot program under subsection (a)—

10 (A) the number of such veterans partici-  
11 pating;

12 (B) the satisfaction of such veterans with  
13 the pilot program;

14 (C) whether participation in the pilot pro-  
15 gram resulted in any clinically relevant improve-  
16 ments for such veterans, as determined by the  
17 health care provider or clinical team that re-  
18 ferred the veteran to participate in the pilot  
19 program; and

20 (D) such other factors as the Secretary  
21 may determine appropriate; and

22 (2) establish processes to document and track  
23 the progress of such veterans under the pilot pro-  
24 gram with respect to health benefits and improve-  
25 ments.

1 (h) REPORT BY SECRETARY.—Not later than 1 year  
2 before the date on which the pilot program under sub-  
3 section (a) terminates, the Secretary shall submit to the  
4 Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Rep-  
5 resentatives and the Senate a report containing the rec-  
6 ommendations of the Secretary regarding—

7 (1) whether to extend or make permanent the  
8 pilot program; and

9 (2) the feasibility and advisability of expanding  
10 the pilot program to address mental health condi-  
11 tions other than PTSD.

12 (i) GAO BRIEFING AND STUDY.—

13 (1) BRIEFING.—Not later than 1 year after the  
14 date of the commencement of the pilot program  
15 under subsection (a), the Comptroller General of the  
16 United States shall provide to the Committees on  
17 Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives  
18 and the Senate a briefing on the methodology estab-  
19 lished for the pilot program.

20 (2) REPORT.—Not later than 270 days after  
21 the date on which the pilot program terminates, the  
22 Comptroller General shall submit to the committees  
23 specified in paragraph (1) a report on the pilot pro-  
24 gram. Such report shall include an evaluation of the

1 approach and methodology used for the pilot pro-  
2 gram with respect to—

3 (A) assisting veterans with PTSD; and

4 (B) measuring relevant metrics, such as  
5 reduction in scores under the Clinician Admin-  
6 istered PTSD Scale (CAPS), improvement in  
7 psychosocial function, and therapeutic compli-  
8 ance.

9 (j) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

10 (1) The term “accredited service dog training  
11 organization” means an organization described in  
12 section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of  
13 1986 that—

14 (A) provides service dogs to veterans with  
15 PTSD; and

16 (B) is accredited by an accrediting organi-  
17 zation with demonstrated experience, national  
18 scope, and recognized leadership and expertise  
19 in the training of service dogs and education in  
20 the use of service dogs (as determined by the  
21 Secretary).

22 (2) The term “eligible veteran” means a vet-  
23 eran who—

24 (A) is enrolled in the patient enrollment  
25 system in the Department of Veterans Affairs

1 under section 1705 of title 38, United States  
2 Code; and

3 (B) has been recommended for participa-  
4 tion in the pilot program under subsection (a)  
5 by a qualified mental health care provider or  
6 clinical team based on medical judgment that  
7 the veteran may benefit from such participation  
8 with respect to the diagnosed PTSD of the vet-  
9 eran.

10 (3) The term “service dog training instructor”  
11 means an instructor who provides the direct training  
12 of veterans with PTSD in the art and science of  
13 service dog training and handling.

14 **SEC. 3. PROVISION OF SERVICE DOGS AND VETERINARY IN-**  
15 **SURANCE BENEFITS TO VETERANS WITH**  
16 **POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER WHO**  
17 **DO NOT HAVE CERTAIN IMPAIRMENTS.**

18 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1714 of title 38, United  
19 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-  
20 lowing new subsections:

21 “(e) The Secretary may provide a service dog to a  
22 veteran under subsection (c)(3) regardless of whether the  
23 veteran has a mobility impairment.

24 “(f)(1) The Secretary shall provide to any veteran de-  
25 scribed in paragraph (2) a commercially available veteri-

1 nary insurance policy for each dog provided to such vet-  
2 eran under subsection (b) or (c).

3 “(2) A veteran described in this paragraph is a vet-  
4 eran who—

5 “(A) is diagnosed with post-traumatic stress  
6 disorder or a visual, hearing, or substantial mobility  
7 impairment;

8 “(B) has received a dog under subsection (b) or  
9 (c) in connection with such disorder or impairment;  
10 and

11 “(C) meets such other requirements as the Sec-  
12 retary may prescribe.”.

13 (b) APPLICABILITY.—Section 1714(f) of title 38,  
14 United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall  
15 apply with respect to a veteran provided a dog by the Sec-  
16 retary of Veterans Affairs on or after the date of the en-  
17 actment of this Act.

Passed the House of Representatives May 12, 2021.

Attest:

*Clerk.*

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