

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4225

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a pilot program to furnish doula services to veterans.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 26, 2026

Mr. BOOKER (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a pilot program to furnish doula 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 “Delivering Optimally
5 Urgent Labor Access for Veterans Affairs Act of 2026”
6 or the “DOULA for VA Act of 2026”.

7 **SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM ON DOULA SUPPORT FOR VET-**
8 **ERANS.**

9 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

1 (1) There are approximately 2,100,000 women
2 within the veteran population in the United States,
3 the fastest growing demographic group of veterans.

4 (2) By 2020, the proportion of all women vet-
5 erans using health care from the Department of Vet-
6 erans Affairs grew to 28 percent from 17 percent in
7 2010.

8 (3) During the period of 2010 through 2020,
9 the number of women veterans using health care
10 from the Department nearly doubled, from 316,961
11 to 556,135.

12 (4) In 2025, there are more than 600,000
13 women receiving health care from the Department.

14 (5) Although prenatal care and delivery is not
15 provided in facilities of the Department, pregnant
16 women seeking care from the Department for other
17 conditions may also need emergency care and re-
18 quire coordination of services through the Veterans
19 Community Care Program under section 1703 of
20 title 38, United States Code.

21 (6) The number of women veteran patients with
22 obstetric deliveries paid for by the Department in-
23 creased to more than 5,500 in fiscal year 2019, tri-
24 ple the number of such patients in fiscal year 2009,
25 and 22 times the number from fiscal year 1999.

1 (7) Notably, a quarter of the deliveries specified
2 in paragraph (5) from fiscal year 2019 were among
3 veterans of advanced maternal age (35 years old or
4 older) and a quarter were among Black or African-
5 American veterans, both groups known to experience
6 higher risk of severe maternal morbidity.

7 (8) A study in 2010 found that veterans return-
8 ing from Operation Enduring Freedom and Oper-
9 ation Iraqi Freedom who experienced pregnancy
10 were twice as likely to have a diagnosis of depres-
11 sion, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, bipolar
12 disorder, or schizophrenia as those who had not ex-
13 perienced a pregnancy.

14 (9) The number of women veterans of reproduc-
15 tive age seeking care from the Department continues
16 to grow (more than 228,000 as of fiscal year 2020).
17 (b) PROGRAM.—

18 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year
19 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
20 retary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a pilot pro-
21 gram to furnish doula services to covered veterans
22 through eligible entities by expanding the Whole
23 Health model of the Department of Veterans Af-
24 fairs, or successor model, to measure the impact
25 that doula support services have on birth and mental

1 health outcomes of pregnant veterans (in this section
2 referred to as the “pilot program”).

3 (2) CONSIDERATION.—In carrying out the pilot
4 program, the Secretary shall consider all types of
5 doulas, including traditional and community-based
6 doulas.

7 (3) CONSULTATION.—In designing and imple-
8 menting the pilot program, the Secretary shall con-
9 sult with stakeholders, including—

10 (A) organizations representing veterans,
11 including veterans that are disproportionately
12 impacted by poor maternal health outcomes;

13 (B) community-based health care profes-
14 sionals, including doulas, and other stake-
15 holders; and

16 (C) experts in promoting health equity and
17 combating racial bias in health care settings.

18 (4) GOALS.—The goals of the pilot program are
19 the following:

20 (A) To improve—

21 (i) maternal, mental health, and in-
22 fant care outcomes;

23 (ii) integration of doula support serv-
24 ices into the Whole Health model of the
25 Department, or successor model; and

1 (iii) the experience of women receiving
2 maternity care from the Department, in-
3 cluding by increasing the ability of a
4 woman to develop and follow her own
5 birthing plan.

6 (B) To reengage veterans with the Depart-
7 ment after giving birth.

8 (c) LOCATIONS.—The Secretary shall carry out the
9 pilot program in—

10 (1) the three Veterans Integrated Service Net-
11 works of the Department that have the highest per-
12 centage of female veterans enrolled in the patient
13 enrollment system of the Department established
14 and operated under section 1705(a) of title 38,
15 United States Code, compared to the total number
16 of enrolled veterans in such Network;

17 (2) the three Veterans Integrated Service Net-
18 works that have the lowest percentage of female vet-
19 erans enrolled in the patient enrollment system com-
20 pared to the total number of enrolled veterans in
21 such Network; and

22 (3) at least one Veterans Integrated Services
23 Network—

24 (A) located in or serving a Frontier State
25 (as defined in section 1886(d)(3)(E)(iii)(II) of

1 the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C.
2 1395ww(d)(3)(E)(iii)(II))) where more than $\frac{1}{3}$
3 of the population lives in frontier land; and

4 (B) serving populations experiencing high-
5 er average risk and prevalence for maternal
6 mental health disorders, including American In-
7 dian or Alaska Native veterans.

8 (d) OPEN PARTICIPATION.—The Secretary shall
9 allow any eligible entity or covered veteran interested in
10 participating in the pilot program to participate in the
11 pilot program.

12 (e) SERVICES PROVIDED.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—Under the pilot program, a
14 covered veteran shall receive not more than 10 ses-
15 sions of care from a doula under the Whole Health
16 model of the Department, or successor model, under
17 which a doula works as an advocate for the veteran
18 alongside the medical team for the veteran.

19 (2) SESSIONS.—Sessions covered under para-
20 graph (1) shall be as follows:

21 (A) Three or four sessions before labor and
22 delivery.

23 (B) One session during labor and delivery.

1 (C) Three or four sessions after post-
 2 partum, which may be conducted via the mobile
 3 application for VA Video Connect.

4 (f) ADMINISTRATION OF PILOT PROGRAM.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Office of Women’s
 6 Health of the Department of Veterans Affairs, or
 7 successor office (in this section referred to as the
 8 “Office”), shall—

9 (A) coordinate services and activities under
 10 the pilot program;

11 (B) oversee the administration of the pilot
 12 program; and

13 (C) conduct onsite assessments of medical
 14 facilities of the Department that are partici-
 15 pating in the pilot program.

16 (2) GUIDELINES FOR VETERAN-SPECIFIC
 17 CARE.—The Office shall establish guidelines under
 18 the pilot program for training doulas on military
 19 sexual trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder.

20 (3) AMOUNTS FOR CARE.—The Office may rec-
 21 ommend to the Secretary appropriate payment
 22 amounts for care and services provided under the
 23 pilot program, which shall not exceed \$3,500 per
 24 doula per veteran.

25 (g) DOULA SERVICE COORDINATOR.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in consulta-
 2 tion with the Office, shall establish a Doula Service
 3 Coordinator within the functions of the Maternity
 4 Care Coordinator at each medical facility of the De-
 5 partment that is participating in the pilot program.

6 (2) DUTIES.—A Doula Service Coordinator es-
 7 tablished under paragraph (1) at a medical facility
 8 shall be responsible for—

9 (A) working with eligible entities, doulas,
 10 and covered veterans participating in the pilot
 11 program; and

12 (B) managing payment between eligible en-
 13 tities and the Department under the pilot pro-
 14 gram.

15 (3) TRACKING OF INFORMATION.—A doula pro-
 16 viding services under the pilot program shall report
 17 to the applicable Doula Service Coordinator after
 18 each session conducted under the pilot program.

19 (4) COORDINATION WITH WOMEN’S PROGRAM
 20 MANAGER.—A Doula Service Coordinator for a med-
 21 ical facility of the Department shall coordinate with
 22 the women’s program manager for that facility in
 23 carrying out the duties of the Doula Service Coordi-
 24 nator under the pilot program.

1 (h) TERM OF PILOT PROGRAM.—The Secretary shall
2 conduct the pilot program for a period of five years.

3 (i) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall
4 establish a process to provide technical assistance to eligi-
5 ble entities and doulas participating in the pilot program.

6 (j) REPORT.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year
8 after the date of the enactment of this Act, and an-
9 nually thereafter for each year in which the pilot
10 program is carried out, the Secretary shall submit to
11 the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate
12 and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the
13 House of Representatives a report on the pilot pro-
14 gram.

15 (2) FINAL REPORT.—As part of the final report
16 submitted under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall
17 include recommendations on whether the model
18 studied in the pilot program should be continued or
19 more widely adopted by the Department.

20 (k) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
21 are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary, for
22 each of fiscal years 2027 through 2032, such sums as may
23 be necessary to carry out this section.

24 (l) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

1 (1) COVERED VETERAN.—The term “covered
2 veteran” means a pregnant veteran or a formerly
3 pregnant veteran (with respect to sessions post-
4 partum) who is enrolled in the patient enrollment
5 system of the Department of Veterans Affairs estab-
6 lished and operated under section 1705(a) of title
7 38, United States Code.

8 (2) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
9 ty” means an entity that provides medically accu-
10 rate, comprehensive maternity services to covered
11 veterans under the laws administered by the Sec-
12 retary, including under the Veterans Community
13 Care Program under section 1703 of title 38, United
14 States Code.

15 (3) VA VIDEO CONNECT.—The term “VA Video
16 Connect” means the program of the Department of
17 Veterans Affairs to connect veterans with their
18 health care team from anywhere, using encryption to
19 ensure a secure and private session.

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