

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 350

To amend title 10, United States Code, to improve the health care benefits under the TRICARE program and otherwise improve that program, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 3, 1999

Mrs. HUTCHISON (for herself, Mr. ALLARD, and Mr. HAGEL) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services

A BILL

To amend title 10, United States Code, to improve the health care benefits under the TRICARE program and otherwise improve that program, 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,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Military Health Care
5 Improvement Act of 1999”.

6 **SEC. 2. IMPROVEMENT OF TRICARE PROGRAM.**

7 (a) IMPROVEMENT OF TRICARE PROGRAM.—Chap-
8 ter 55 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by in-
9 serting after section 1097a the following new section:

1 **“§ 1097b. TRICARE: comparability of benefits with**
2 **benefits under Federal Employees Health**
3 **Benefits program; other requirements**

4 “(a) COMPARABILITY OF BENEFITS.—(1) The Sec-
5 retary of Defense shall ensure that the health care cov-
6 erage and dental care coverage available through the
7 TRICARE program is substantially similar to the health
8 care coverage and dental care coverage available under the
9 health benefits plan offered under the Federal Employees
10 Health Benefits program established under chapter 89 of
11 title 5 that has the most subscribers as of January 1,
12 2000.

13 “(2) In determining the similarity of health care cov-
14 erage and dental care coverage offered under the
15 TRICARE program and such covered offered under the
16 Federal Employee Health Benefits program for purposes
17 of paragraph (1), the Secretary of Defense shall take into
18 account the benefits available under such programs and
19 the premiums, co-payments, deductibles, and other out-of-
20 pocket costs associated with receipt of such benefits.

21 “(b) PORTABILITY OF BENEFITS.—The Secretary of
22 Defense shall provide that any covered beneficiary enrolled
23 in the TRICARE program may receive benefits under that
24 program at facilities that provide benefits under that pro-
25 gram throughout the various regions of that program.

1 “(c) PATIENT MANAGEMENT.—(1) The Secretary of
2 Defense shall, to the maximum extent practicable, mini-
3 mize the authorization or certification requirements im-
4 posed upon covered beneficiaries under the TRICARE
5 program as a condition of access to benefits under that
6 program.

7 “(2) The Secretary of Defense shall utilize practices
8 for processing claims under the TRICARE program that
9 are similar to the best commercial practices for processing
10 claims for health care services in a simplified and expe-
11 dited manner. To the maximum extent practicable, such
12 practices shall include electronic processing of claims.

13 “(d) REIMBURSEMENT OF HEALTH CARE PROVID-
14 ERS.—The Secretary of Defense may increase the level of
15 reimbursement provided to health care providers under the
16 TRICARE program beyond levels otherwise authorized for
17 such reimbursement where such increase is necessary in
18 order to ensure the availability of an adequate number of
19 qualified health care providers under the TRICARE pro-
20 gram.

21 “(e) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary of Defense
22 shall carry out any actions under this section after con-
23 sultation with the other administering Secretaries.

24 “(f) DEADLINE FOR CERTAIN ACTIONS.—The Sec-
25 retary of Defense shall meet the requirements set forth

1 in subsections (a), (b), and (c) not later than one year
2 after the date of the enactment of the Military Health
3 Care Improvement Act of 1999.”.

4 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
5 at the beginning of chapter 55 of such title is amended
6 by inserting after the item relating to section 1097a the
7 following new item:

“1097b. TRICARE: comparability of benefits with benefits under Federal Em-
ployees Health Benefits program; other requirements.”.

