Improving Whole Health for Veterans with Chronic Conditions Act

Sec. 1: Short Title

Sec. 2: Sense of Congress
(1) the Department of Veterans Affairs has pioneered a whole health approach to health care that provides access to alternative medicines, delivers a holistic approach to health and well-being, and repeatedly demonstrates better health outcomes than the private sector at a low cost to taxpayers in the United States;
(2) the effects of poor dental care are shown to worsen the symptoms of diabetes and heart disease;
(3) diabetes and heart disease are shown to increase the risk of periodontal disease;
(4) the combination of diabetes, heart disease, and periodontal disease can be fatal; and
(5) to best achieve a whole health model for the provision of health care to veterans with diabetes and heart disease and reduce long-term costs, the Department must furnish preventative and comprehensive dental care to veterans diagnosed with diabetes and heart disease.

Sec. 3: Definitions
(1) Veterans shall receive the same care afforded to veterans with a 100% service-connected disability rating.
(2) A covered veteran is a veteran eligible for health care at the VA, is not eligible for dental care, and has a diagnosis of type 1 or type 2 diabetes or ischemic heart disease.

Sec. 4: Pilot Program to furnish dental care from the Department of Veterans Affairs to veterans diagnosed with diabetes or ischemic heart disease.
(a) The Secretary shall start a pilot program to provide dental care to veterans.
(b) The pilot shall be four years long.
(c) The pilot shall be carried out at all VA facilities with a dental clinic.
   • The Secretary shall test the efficacy of mobile dental clinics.
   • The Secretary shall test the efficacy of portable dental clinics.
(d) The Secretary shall test the efficacy of dental therapists and teledentistry.
(e) The Secretary shall inform all covered veterans of their eligibility to participate in the pilot.
   • The Secretary may collect copayments for care covered under the pilot.
(f) The Secretary shall submit a report to Congress on the impact of the expansion of dental care and its findings on tested methodologies.
(g) MISSION Act wait and drive time standards apply to veterans seeking care under the pilot.

Sec. 4: Student Loan Repayment
(a) To ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs has sufficient staff to provide dental service to veterans, the VA shall implement a loan reimbursement program for qualified dental care professionals that agree to serve as a dentist of the Department for the duration of the pilot at a location deemed of high need by the Secretary.
(b) The maximum reimbursement amount is $100,000 per dentist, $40,000 per oral surgeon, and 25,000 per dental hygienist participating in the program, or a cap of $140,000 for participants of a dual degree.
(c) Locations chosen by the Secretary shall be those with the greatest need.

Sec. 5: Appropriations
(a) The funds necessary for this act will be made available for a period of eight years