

Representative Buddy Carter

Statement for the Record

House Committee on Veterans Affairs

Legislative Hearing

07/23/2020

- I would like to first thank the Committee for allowing me the opportunity to speak in support of the bill that I introduced and now sits before the Committee.
- H.R. 3228, the “VA MISSION Telehealth Clarification Act,” is a simple bill that builds on the VA Mission Act’s historic expansion of the veterans’ health system.
- One of the most significant parts of the VA Mission Act was the authorization for the VA to use telehealth and provide care across state lines.
- We are now seeing with the COVID-19 pandemic how truly beneficial these technologies can be for our veterans.
- In fact, the VA Medical Center in Charleston, SC, which serves part of my district along Georgia’s coast, has had an over 200% increase in telehealth medical services during the pandemic.
- This is an incredibly important ability for the VA to have, however, the law did not authorize trainees within the VA to use telehealth technologies — only practitioners with a full license.
- As telehealth medicine grows in prevalence, we need for interns, residents, and fellows to gain experience using these services. Especially considering that many of these trainees later go on to work as doctors at the VA, bringing with them a wealth of experience.
- Rather than depending on doctors to learn while on the job, which could delay the rollout of care, this bill would allow trainees to gain experience on telehealth systems while properly supervised by credentialed VA staff.
- The bill will continue to authorize all those VA healthcare professionals who are already authorized to provide telehealth care but simply would allow supervised trainees to use these systems as well.

- While discussions with the Committee have shown that Congress intended for trainees to be included from the beginning, the VA's reading of the law does not include trainees, although they have expressed their desire to include them in telehealth services.
- The "VA Mission Telehealth Clarification Act" will give VA the certainty to include trainees satisfying health professional training program requirements and help serve our veterans.
- Again, this is a commonsense bill. It is bipartisan and has received support from The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, AMVETS, and Paralyzed Veterans of America.
- I want to thank the Committee again for allowing me the opportunity to speak on this bill and hope that it will soon report it favorably so we can further improve the VA's telehealth capabilities.