

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8005

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to provide veterans access to computerized cognitive behavioral therapy.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 11, 2020

Mr. GOLDEN (for himself and Mr. BANKS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to provide veterans access to computerized cognitive behavioral therapy.

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 “Veterans Access to
5 Online Treatment Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE VETERANS ACCESS**
7 **TO COMPUTERIZED COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL**
8 **THERAPY.**

9 (a) PILOT PROGRAM.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Beginning not later than
2 210 days after the date of the enactment of this Act,
3 the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a
4 pilot program to treat eligible veterans suffering
5 from depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress dis-
6 order, military sexual trauma, or substance use dis-
7 order, or a combination thereof, who are already re-
8 ceiving evidence-based therapy from the Department
9 of Veterans Affairs.

10 (2) COMPUTERIZED COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL
11 THERAPY.—In carrying out the pilot program under
12 paragraph (1), the Secretary may use computerized
13 cognitive behavioral therapy to treat eligible vet-
14 erans.

15 (3) CONTINUATION OF PROGRAMS.—The Sec-
16 retary may—

17 (A) continue any cognitive behavioral ther-
18 apy programs in place on or before the date of
19 the enactment of this Act; and

20 (B) may use data or other observations
21 under any such programs in making the assess-
22 ment required under subsection (h)(1).

23 (b) ELIGIBLE VETERANS.—A veteran is eligible to
24 participate in the pilot program under subsection (a) if
25 the veteran is enrolled in the system of patient enrollment

1 of the Department of Veterans Affairs established and op-
2 erated under section 1705(a) of title 38, United States
3 Code.

4 (c) DURATION.—The Secretary shall carry out the
5 pilot program under subsection (a) for a two-year period
6 beginning on the commencement of the program.

7 (d) LOCATIONS.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall select
9 not fewer than three facilities of the Department of
10 Veterans Affairs at which to carry out the pilot pro-
11 gram under subsection (a).

12 (2) SELECTION CRITERIA.—In selecting facili-
13 ties under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall ensure
14 that—

15 (A) the locations are in geographically di-
16 verse areas; and

17 (B) not fewer than two facilities serve vet-
18 erans in rural or highly rural areas.

19 (e) ACCESS TO CHAT.—In carrying out the pilot pro-
20 gram under subsection (a), the Secretary shall ensure that
21 veterans participating in the pilot program have access via
22 chat to a mental health provider 24 hours per day, seven
23 days per week.

24 (f) PROMOTION OF VETERANS CRISIS LINE.—The
25 Secretary shall promote the availability of the Veterans

1 Crisis Line to veterans participating in the pilot program
2 under subsection (a).

3 (g) DEPARTMENT WEBSITE.—In implementing the
4 pilot program under subsection (a), the Secretary, to the
5 extent feasible, shall use a website of the Department of
6 Veterans Affairs to host the pilot program.

7 (h) REPORTS.—

8 (1) INTERIM REPORT.—

9 (A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year
10 after the commencement of the pilot program
11 under subsection (a), the Secretary shall submit
12 to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the
13 Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs
14 of the House of Representatives a report on the
15 progress of the pilot program.

16 (B) ELEMENTS.—The report required by
17 subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

18 (i) The number of participants in the
19 pilot program and the number of persons
20 whose experience in any other online cog-
21 nitive behavioral therapy programs con-
22 ducted by the Department of Veterans Af-
23 fairs were used in the assessment under
24 clause (ii).

1 (ii) An assessment of whether partici-
2 pation by a veteran in the pilot program
3 resulted in any changes in clinically rel-
4 evant endpoints for the veteran with re-
5 spect to the conditions specified in sub-
6 section (a)(1).

7 (iii) Any recommendations of the Sec-
8 retary with respect to extending or expand-
9 ing the pilot program.

10 (2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 90 days
11 after the termination of the pilot program under
12 subsection (a), the Secretary shall submit to the
13 Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and
14 the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of
15 Representatives a final report on the pilot program.

16 (i) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

17 (1) The term “highly rural area” has the mean-
18 ing given that term in section 1703(i)(2)(B) of title
19 38, United States Code.

20 (2) The term “Veterans Crisis Line” means the
21 toll-free hotline for veterans established under sec-
22 tion 1720F(h) of title 38, United States Code.

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