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(Original Signature of Member)

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. _____

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to provide grants to outpatient mental health facilities for the provision of culturally competent, evidence-based mental health care for veterans, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. BOST introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee
on _____

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to provide grants to outpatient mental health facilities for the provision of culturally competent, evidence-based mental health care for veterans, 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 “Veterans’ Mental
5 Health Access Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS PILOT PRO-**
2 **GRAM TO PROVIDE GRANTS TO MEDICAL FA-**
3 **CILITIES FOR THE PROVISION OF CUL-**
4 **TURALLY COMPETENT, EVIDENCE-BASED**
5 **MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR VETERANS.**

6 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans
7 Affairs shall carry out a three-year pilot program under
8 which the Secretary shall make grants to eligible mental
9 health care providers for the provision of culturally com-
10 petent, evidence-based mental health care for veterans.

11 (b) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible to receive a grant
12 under the pilot program, a mental health care provider
13 shall—

14 (1) be a non-profit organization;

15 (2) have operated at least one outpatient men-
16 tal health facility in the United States for a contin-
17 uous period of at least three years; and

18 (3) submit to the Secretary an application that
19 includes such information and assurances as the
20 Secretary may require, including—

21 (A) an identification of the outpatient fa-
22 cility or facilities where the provider will provide
23 mental health care to veterans using the grant
24 funds;

25 (B) a plan under which at least one clini-
26 cian employed by the provider at each facility

1 for which a grant is made is trained to provide
2 culturally competent veterans mental health
3 care pursuant to the requirements established
4 by the Secretary under subsection (f); and

5 (C) an identification of the percentage of
6 the operating budget for each such facility that
7 was provided through Federal grants during the
8 fiscal year preceding the year during which the
9 application is submitted.

10 (c) USE OF FUNDS.—

11 (1) IN GENERAL.—The recipient of a grant
12 under the pilot program shall use the grant—

13 (A) to provide culturally competent, evi-
14 dence-based mental health care for veterans;

15 (B) to operate an existing outpatient men-
16 tal health facility or establish a new outpatient
17 mental health facility for the purpose of pro-
18 viding such care; and

19 (C) to encourage veterans who are eligible
20 for enrollment in the patient enrollment system
21 under section 1705 of title 38, United States
22 Code, to enroll in such system and to receive
23 medical services furnished by the Department
24 of Veterans Affairs.

1 (2) LIMITATIONS.—The recipient of a grant
2 under the pilot program may not—

3 (A) charge any veteran a fee associated
4 with the receipt of mental health care; or

5 (B) refuse to provide mental health care to
6 any veteran on the basis that the veteran is not
7 eligible for reimbursement for such care under
8 a health plan contract or any Federal, State, or
9 local government program.

10 (3) REIMBURSEMENT.—Nothing in this sub-
11 section shall prevent the recipient of a grant under
12 the pilot program from seeking or receiving reim-
13 bursement for all, or a portion, of the mental health
14 care provided to a veteran, including reimbursement
15 under a health plan contract, the Community Care
16 Program of the Department under section 1703 of
17 title 38, United States Care, or any other Federal,
18 State, or local government program.

19 (d) SELECTION OF FACILITIES.—In selecting out-
20 patient mental health facilities for the receipt of grants
21 under the pilot program, the Secretary—

22 (1) shall ensure that grants are distributed
23 evenly among outpatient mental health facilities lo-
24 cated in rural and urban areas;

1 (2) may consider the proportion of veterans his-
2 torically served by the outpatient mental health fa-
3 cilities; and

4 (3) may prioritize outpatient mental health fa-
5 cilities located in areas that the Secretary deter-
6 mines—

7 (A) are medically underserved;

8 (B) have large veteran populations;

9 (C) are located near military installations;

10 or

11 (D) have large numbers of veterans at high
12 risk of suicide.

13 (e) AMOUNT OF GRANT.—

14 (1) IN GENERAL.—

15 (A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in
16 subparagraph (B), no grant under the pilot pro-
17 gram for a facility for any fiscal year may ex-
18 ceed \$1,500,000.

19 (B) LIMITATION.—In the case of an out-
20 patient mental health facility for which at least
21 50 percent of the operating budget of the facil-
22 ity for the preceding fiscal year was provided
23 through Federal grants, no grant under the
24 pilot program for the facility for any fiscal year
25 may exceed the lesser of—

1 (i) 50 percent of the operating budget
2 of the facility; or

3 (ii) \$1,500,000.

4 (2) MULTIPLE GRANTS.—The recipient of a
5 grant under the pilot program—

6 (A) may apply for, and receive, grants for
7 more than one facility of the recipient for any
8 fiscal year; and

9 (B) may apply for, and receive, a grant for
10 a facility that has already received a grant
11 under the pilot program.

12 (f) TRAINING REQUIREMENT.—The Secretary shall
13 establish the requirements for the training referred to in
14 subsection (b)(2)(A).

15 (g) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary shall prescribe
16 regulations to carry out this section, which shall include
17 a requirement that each recipient of a grant under the
18 pilot program shall—

19 (1) demonstrate the capacity to provide ac-
20 countability;

21 (2) demonstrate clinical outcomes; and

22 (3) justify the effective use of any private in-
23 vestment funds or Federal grant funds through data
24 collection and reporting metrics.

1 (h) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the com-
2 pletion of the pilot program under this section, the Sec-
3 retary shall submit to Congress a report on the pilot pro-
4 gram that includes the following:

5 (1) The number of veterans who received men-
6 tal health care under the program.

7 (2) The demographics of the veterans served.

8 (3) An identification of the types of mental
9 health care provided and the time period for which
10 such care was provided.

11 (4) An identification of program outcomes.

12 (5) The number of veterans who received men-
13 tal health care under the program and subsequently
14 enrolled in the patient enrollment system under sec-
15 tion 1705 of title 38, United States Code.

16 (6) An identification of any obstacles faced by
17 grant recipients in providing mental health care
18 under the program.

19 (i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
20 authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to carry
21 out the pilot program under this section \$20,000,000 for
22 each of fiscal years 2025 through 2027.