

112TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1124

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the utilization of teleconsultation, teleretinal imaging, telemedicine, and telehealth coordination services for the provision of health care to veterans, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 26, 2011

Mr. CONRAD introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the utilization of teleconsultation, teleretinal imaging, telemedicine, and telehealth coordination services for the provision of health care to 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 Telemedicine
5 Act of 2011”.

1 **SEC. 2. TELECONSULTATION AND TELEMEDICINE.**

2 (a) TELECONSULTATION AND TELERETINAL IMAG-
3 ING.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 17
5 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by add-
6 ing at the end the following new section:

7 **“§ 1709. Teleconsultation and teleretinal imaging**

8 “(a) TELECONSULTATION.—(1) The Secretary shall
9 carry out a program of teleconsultation for the provision
10 of remote mental health and traumatic brain injury as-
11 sessments in facilities of the Department that are not oth-
12 erwise able to provide such assessments without con-
13 tracting with third party providers or reimbursing pro-
14 viders through a fee basis system.

15 “(2) The Secretary shall, in consultation with appro-
16 priate professional societies, promulgate technical and
17 clinical care standards for the use of teleconsultation serv-
18 ices within facilities of the Department.

19 “(b) TELERETINAL IMAGING.—(1) The Secretary
20 shall carry out a program of teleretinal imaging in each
21 Veterans Integrated Services Network (VISN).

22 “(2) In each fiscal year beginning with fiscal year
23 2010 and ending with fiscal year 2015, the Secretary shall
24 increase the number of patients enrolled in each teleretinal
25 imaging program under paragraph (1) by not less than

1 five percent from the number of patients enrolled in each
 2 respective program in the previous fiscal year.

3 “(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

4 “(1) The term ‘teleconsultation’ means the use
 5 by a health care specialist of telecommunications to
 6 assist another health care provider in rendering a di-
 7 agnosis or treatment.

8 “(2) The term ‘teleretinal imaging’ means the
 9 use by a health care specialist of telecommuni-
 10 cations, digital retinal imaging, and remote image
 11 interpretation to provide eye care.”.

12 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
 13 tions at the beginning of chapter 17 of such title is
 14 amended by inserting after the item related to sec-
 15 tion 1708 the following new item:

“1709. Teleconsultation and teleretinal imaging.”.

16 (b) TRAINING IN TELEMEDICINE.—The Secretary of
 17 Veterans Affairs shall require each Department of Vet-
 18 erans Affairs facility that is involved in the training of
 19 medical residents to work with each university concerned
 20 to develop an elective rotation in telemedicine for such
 21 residents.

22 (c) ENHANCEMENT OF VERA.—

23 (1) INCENTIVES FOR PROVISION OF TELECON-
 24 SULTATION, TELERETINAL IMAGING, TELEMEDICINE,
 25 AND TELEHEALTH SERVICES.—The Secretary of

1 Veterans Affairs shall modify the Veterans Equitable
2 Resource Allocation system to provide incentives for
3 the utilization of teleconsultation, teleretinal imag-
4 ing, telemedicine, and telehealth coordination serv-
5 ices.

6 (2) INCLUSION OF TELEMEDICINE VISITS IN
7 WORKLOAD REPORTING.—The Secretary shall mod-
8 ify the Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation sys-
9 tem to require the inclusion of all telemedicine visits
10 in the calculation of facility workload.

11 (d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

12 (1) TELECONSULTATION AND TELERETINAL IM-
13 AGING.—The terms “teleconsultation” and “teleret-
14 inal imaging” have the meanings given such terms
15 in section 1720G of title 38, United States Code, as
16 added by subsection (a).

17 (2) TELEMEDICINE.—The term “telemedicine”
18 means the use by a health care provider of tele-
19 communications to assist in the diagnosis or treat-
20 ment of a patient’s medical condition.

21 (3) TELEHEALTH.—The term “telehealth”
22 means the use of telecommunications to collect pa-
23 tient data remotely and send data to a monitoring
24 station for interpretation.

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