

112TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 4023

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

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 14, 2012

Ms. HOCHUL (for herself and Mr. ROE of Tennessee) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the use 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’ Telehealth
5 and Telemedicine Improvement Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. TELECONSULTATION AND TELEMEDICINE.**

7 (a) TELECONSULTATION AND TELERETINAL IMAG-
8 ING.—

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

4 **“§ 1709. Teleconsultation and teleretinal imaging**

5 “(a) TELECONSULTATION.—(1) The Secretary shall
6 carry out a program to increase the use of teleconsulta-
7 tion, telemedicine, telehealth, and home telehealth by the
8 Department.

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

13 “(b) TELERETINAL IMAGING.—(1) The Secretary
14 shall carry out a program to increase the use of teleretinal
15 imaging by the Department in each Veterans Integrated
16 Services Network.

17 “(2) In each fiscal year beginning with fiscal year
18 2013 and ending with fiscal year 2018, the Secretary shall
19 increase the number of patients enrolled in each teleretinal
20 imaging program under paragraph (1) by not less than
21 five percent from the number of patients enrolled in each
22 respective program in the previous fiscal year.

23 “(c) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Not later than March 1 of
24 each year, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees
25 on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Rep-

1 representatives a report on the Department’s implementation
2 of telehealth and telemedicine programs, including the
3 program of teleconsultation, telemedicine, telehealth, and
4 home telehealth under subsection (a) and the program of
5 teleretinal imaging under subsection (b).

6 “(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

7 “(1) The term ‘home telehealth’ includes, but is
8 not limited to, the use of telecommunication tech-
9 nology and information technology to support the
10 monitoring, transmission, and interpretation of clin-
11 ical data derived from patients situated in a home,
12 community, or other non-health-care facility setting.

13 “(2) The term ‘teleconsultation’ includes, but is
14 not limited to, the use by a health care provider of
15 telecommunication technology and information tech-
16 nology to assist another health care provider, at a
17 distant site, in their management, assessment, diag-
18 nosis, and treatment of a patient.

19 “(3) The term ‘telehealth’ includes, but is not
20 limited to, the use of telecommunication technology
21 and information technology to support the provision
22 of health care in situations where the patient and
23 health care provider are separated by geographic dis-
24 tance.

1 “(4) The term ‘telemedicine’ includes, but is
 2 not limited to, the use of telecommunication tech-
 3 nology and information technology to support the
 4 provision of health care in situations where the pa-
 5 tient and health care provider are separated by geo-
 6 graphic distance and the provider is directly man-
 7 aging the care of the patient.

8 “(5) The term ‘teleretinal imaging’ includes,
 9 but is not limited to, the use of telecommunication
 10 technology and information technology to support
 11 the remote assessment of eye conditions.”.

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.—

17 (1) MEDICAL RESIDENTS.—The Secretary of
 18 Veterans Affairs shall require each Department of
 19 Veterans Affairs facility that is involved in the train-
 20 ing of medical residents to work with each university
 21 concerned to develop an elective rotation in telemedi-
 22 cine for such residents.

23 (2) RURAL VETERANS.—The Secretary shall
 24 provide health care professionals of the Department
 25 with education and training with respect to using

1 telemedicine to provide care to veterans in rural
2 areas.

3 (c) ENHANCEMENT OF VERA.—

4 (1) INCENTIVES FOR PROVISION OF TELECON-
5 SULTATION, TELERETINAL IMAGING, TELEMEDICINE,
6 AND TELEHEALTH SERVICES.—The Secretary shall
7 modify the Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation
8 system to provide incentives for the use of telecon-
9 sultation, teleretinal imaging, telemedicine, and tele-
10 health coordination services.

11 (2) INCLUSION OF TELEMEDICINE VISITS IN
12 WORKLOAD REPORTING.—The Secretary shall mod-
13 ify the Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation sys-
14 tem to require the inclusion of all telemedicine visits
15 in the calculation of facility workload.

16 (d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section, the terms “tele-
17 consultation”, “telehealth”, “telemedicine”, and “teleret-
18 inal imaging” have the meanings given such terms in sec-
19 tion 1709(d) of title 38, United States Code, as added by
20 subsection (a)(1).

1 **SEC. 3. AUTHORITY TO WAIVE COLLECTION OF COPAY-**
 2 **MENTS FOR TELEHEALTH AND TELEMEDI-**
 3 **CINE VISITS OF VETERANS.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter III of chapter 17 of
 5 title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after
 6 section 1722A the following new section:

7 **“§ 1722B. Copayments: waiver of collection of copay-**
 8 **ments for telehealth and telemedicine**
 9 **visits of veterans**

10 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may waive the im-
 11 position or collection of copayments for teleconsultation,
 12 telemedicine, teleretinal imaging, telehealth, and home
 13 telehealth visits of veterans under the laws administered
 14 by the Secretary.

15 “(b) DEFINITIONS.—The terms ‘teleconsultation’,
 16 ‘telemedicine’, ‘teleretinal imaging’, ‘telehealth’, and
 17 ‘home telehealth’ have the meanings given such terms in
 18 section 1709(d) of this title.”.

19 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
 20 at the beginning of chapter 17 of such title is amended
 21 by inserting after the item relating to section 1722A the
 22 following new item:

“1722B. Copayments: waiver of collection of copayments for telehealth and tele-
 medicine visits of veterans.”.

○