

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4348

To provide for the conduct of a GAO study and report on rural health access during the COVID–19 pandemic.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 28, 2020

Mr. CASSIDY (for himself and Ms. SMITH) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Finance

A BILL

To provide for the conduct of a GAO study and report on rural health access during the COVID–19 pandemic.

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 “Rural Health Care
5 Access Review Act of 2020”.

6 **SEC. 2. GAO STUDY AND REPORT ON RURAL HEALTH AC-**
7 **CESS DURING THE COVID–19 PANDEMIC.**

8 (a) STUDY.—The Comptroller General of the United
9 States shall conduct a study on access to health care in
10 rural areas during the public health emergency described

1 in section 1135(g)(1)(B) of the Social Security Act (42
2 U.S.C. 1320b–5(g)(1)(B)). Such study shall include the
3 following:

4 (1) To the extent data are available, an analysis
5 of access, quality, patient and provider experience,
6 and spending and utilization of telehealth services
7 furnished during such public health emergency. Such
8 evaluation shall be broken out by each of the fol-
9 lowing:

10 (A) Individuals enrolled in the Medicare
11 and Medicaid programs.

12 (B) The provider type and medical spe-
13 cialty of the practitioner furnishing the tele-
14 health service.

15 (C) The modality under which such tele-
16 health services were furnished—

17 (i) using audio-only technology; and

18 (ii) using audio-visual technology.

19 (2) To the extent data are available, an analysis
20 of how these flexibilities influenced private payer
21 policies on telehealth.

22 (3) To the extent data are available, an analysis
23 of disparities in access to, and quality of, telehealth
24 services during such public health emergency.

1 (4) To the extent data are available, an analysis
2 of barriers to accessing and providing telehealth
3 services covered by the Medicare or Medicaid pro-
4 grams, including those related to broadband infra-
5 structure.

6 (5) An analysis of what is known about the pri-
7 vacy impacts of the waiver of Federal privacy regu-
8 lations during such public health emergency.

9 (b) REPORT.—Not later than 24 months after the
10 date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General
11 shall submit a report to the Committee on Finance and
12 the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pen-
13 sions of the Senate and the Committee on Ways and
14 Means and the Committee on Energy and Commerce of
15 the House of Representatives containing the results of the
16 study conducted under subsection (a).

17 (c) DEFINITION OF RURAL AREA.—In this section,
18 the term “rural area” means an area classified as rural
19 by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy of the Health
20 Resources & Services Administration.

○