

117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 4626

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## AN ACT

To amend title 38, United States Code, to require an independent assessment of health care delivery systems and management processes of the Department of Veterans Affairs be conducted once every 10 years, 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “VA Assessment by  
3 Independent Measures Act” or the “VA AIM Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. REQUIREMENT FOR ONGOING INDEPENDENT AS-**

5 **SESSMENTS OF HEALTH CARE DELIVERY SYS-**

6 **TEMS AND MANAGEMENT PROCESSES OF**

7 **THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

8 (a) ONGOING ASSESSMENTS.—Chapter 17 of title 38,  
9 United States Code, is amended by inserting after section  
10 1704 the following new section:

11 **“§ 1704A. Independent assessments of health care de-**  
12 **livery systems and management proc-**  
13 **esses**

14 “(a) INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENTS.—Not less fre-  
15 quently than once every 10 years, the Secretary of Vet-  
16 erns Affairs shall enter into one or more contracts with  
17 a private sector entity or entities described in subsection  
18 (d) to conduct an independent assessment of the hospital  
19 care, medical services, and other health care furnished by  
20 the Department of Veterans Affairs. Such assessment  
21 shall address each of the following:

22 “(1) Current and projected demographics and  
23 unique health care needs of the patient population  
24 served by the Department.

25 “(2) The accuracy of models and forecasting  
26 methods used by the Department to project health

1        care demand, including with respect to veteran de-  
2        mographics, rates of use of health care furnished by  
3        the Department, the inflation of health care costs,  
4        and such other factors as may be determined rel-  
5        evant by the Secretary.

6                “(3) The reliability and accuracy of models and  
7        forecasting methods used by the Department to  
8        project the budgetary needs of the Veterans Health  
9        Administration and how such models and forecasting  
10      methods inform budgetary trends.

11               “(4) The authorities and mechanisms under  
12      which the Secretary may furnish hospital care, med-  
13      ical services, and other health care at Department  
14      and non-Department facilities, including through  
15      Federal and private sector partners and at joint  
16      medical facilities, and the effect of such authorities  
17      and mechanisms on eligibility and access to care.

18               “(5) The organization, workflow processes, and  
19      tools used by the Department to support clinical  
20      staffing, access to care, effective length-of-stay man-  
21      agement and care transitions, positive patient expe-  
22     rience, accurate documentation, and subsequent cod-  
23      ing of inpatient services.

24               “(6) The efforts of the Department to recruit  
25      and retain staff at levels necessary to carry out the

1       functions of the Veterans Health Administration and  
2       the process used by the Department to determine  
3       staffing levels necessary for such functions.

4           “(7) The staffing level at each medical facility  
5       of the Department and the productivity of each  
6       health care provider at the medical facility, com-  
7       pared with health care industry performance  
8       metrics, which may include the following:

9               “(A) An assessment of the case load of,  
10       and number of patients treated by, each health  
11       care provider at such medical facility during an  
12       average week.

13               “(B) An assessment of the time spent by  
14       each such health care provider on matters other  
15       than the case load of the health care provider,  
16       including time spent by the health care provider  
17       as follows:

18                   “(i) At a medical facility that is affili-  
19       ated with the Department.

20                   “(ii) Conducting research.

21                   “(iii) Training or supervising other  
22       health care professionals of the Depart-  
23       ment.

24           “(8) The information technology strategies of  
25       the Department with respect to furnishing and man-

1 aging health care, including an identification of any  
2 weaknesses or opportunities with respect to the tech-  
3 nology used by the Department, especially those  
4 strategies with respect to clinical documentation of  
5 hospital care, medical services, and other health  
6 care, including any clinical images and associated  
7 textual reports, furnished by the Department in De-  
8 partment or non-Department facilities.

9 “(9) Business processes of the Veterans Health  
10 Administration, including processes relating to fur-  
11 nishing non-Department health care, insurance iden-  
12 tification, third-party revenue collection, and vendor  
13 reimbursement, including an identification of mecha-  
14 nisms as follows:

15 “(A) To avoid the payment of penalties to  
16 vendors.

17 “(B) To increase the collection of amounts  
18 owed to the Department for hospital care, med-  
19 ical services, or other health care provided by  
20 the Department, for which reimbursement from  
21 a third party is authorized and to ensure that  
22 such amounts collected are accurate.

23 “(C) To increase the collection of any  
24 other amounts owed to the Department with re-  
25 spect to hospital care, medical services, or other

1           health care and to ensure that such amounts  
2           collected are accurate.

3           “(D) To increase the accuracy and timeli-  
4           ness of Department payments to vendors and  
5           providers.

6           “(E) To reduce expenditures while improv-  
7           ing the quality of care furnished.

8           “(10) The purchase, distribution, and use of  
9           pharmaceuticals, medical and surgical supplies, med-  
10           ical devices, and health care-related services by the  
11           Department, including the following:

12           “(A) The prices paid for, standardization  
13           of, and use by, the Department with respect to  
14           the following:

15            “(i) Pharmaceuticals.

16            “(ii) Medical and surgical supplies.

17            “(iii) Medical devices.

18           “(B) The use by the Department of group  
19           purchasing arrangements to purchase pharma-  
20           ceuticals, medical and surgical supplies, medical  
21           devices, and health care-related services.

22           “(C) The strategy and systems used by the  
23           Department to distribute pharmaceuticals, med-  
24           ical and surgical supplies, medical devices, and  
25           health care-related services to Veterans Inte-

1           grated Service Networks and medical facilities  
2           of the Department.

3                   “(11) The process of the Department for car-  
4                   rying out construction and maintenance projects at  
5                   medical facilities of the Department and the medical  
6                   facility leasing program of the Department.

7           “(12) The competency of Department leader-  
8        ship with respect to culture, accountability, reform  
9        readiness, leadership development, physician align-  
10      ment, employee engagement, succession planning,  
11      and performance management.

12               “(13) The effectiveness of the authorities and  
13               programs of the Department to educate and train  
14               health personnel pursuant to section 7302 of this  
15               title.

16           “(14) The conduct of medical and prosthetic re-  
17           search of the Department.

18           “(15) The provision of Department assistance  
19        to Federal agencies and personnel involved in re-  
20        sponding to a disaster or emergency.

21           “(16) Such additional matters as may be deter-  
22           mined relevant by the Secretary.

23        "(b) TIMING.—The private sector entity or entities  
24 carrying out an assessment pursuant to subsection (a)  
25 shall complete such assessment not later than one year

1 after entering into the contract described in such para-  
2 graph.

3       “(c) DATA.—To the extent practicable, the private  
4 sector entity or entities carrying out an assessment pursu-  
5 ant to subsection (a) shall make use of existing data that  
6 has been compiled by the Department, including data that  
7 has been collected for—

8           “(1) the performance of quadrennial market as-  
9 sessments under section 7330C of this title;

10           “(2) the quarterly publication of information on  
11 staffing and vacancies with respect to the Veterans  
12 Health Administration pursuant to section 505 of  
13 the VA MISSION Act of 2018 (Public Law 115–  
14 182; 38 U.S.C. 301 note); and

15           “(3) the conduct of annual audits pursuant to  
16 section 3102 of the Johnny Isakson and David P.  
17 Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Im-  
18 provement Act of 2020 (Public Law 116–315; 38  
19 U.S.C. 1701 note).

20       “(d) PRIVATE SECTOR ENTITIES DESCRIBED.—A  
21 private sector entity described in this subsection is a pri-  
22 vate entity that—

23           “(1) has experience and proven outcomes in op-  
24 timizing the performance of the health care delivery  
25 systems of the Veterans Health Administration and

1 the private sector and in health care management;  
2 and

3 “(2) specializes in implementing large-scale or-  
4 ganizational and cultural transformations, especially  
5 with respect to health care delivery systems.

6 “(e) PROGRAM INTEGRATOR.—(1) If the Secretary  
7 enters into contracts with more than one private sector  
8 entity under subsection (a) with respect to a single assess-  
9 ment under such subsection, the Secretary shall designate  
10 one such entity that is predominately a health care organi-  
11 zation as the program integrator.

12 “(2) The program integrator designated pursuant to  
13 paragraph (1) shall be responsible for coordinating the  
14 outcomes of the assessments conducted by the private sec-  
15 tor entities pursuant to such contracts.

16 “(f) REPORTS.—(1) Not later than 60 days after  
17 completing an assessment pursuant to subsection (a), the  
18 private sector entity or entities carrying out such assess-  
19 ment shall submit to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and  
20 the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Rep-  
21 resentatives and the Senate a report on the findings and  
22 recommendations of the private sector entity or entities  
23 with respect to such assessment. Such report shall include  
24 an identification of the following:

1               “(A) Any changes with respect to the matters  
2               included in such assessment since the date that is  
3               the later of the following:

4               “(i) The date on which the independent as-  
5               essment under section 201 of the Veterans Ac-  
6               cess, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014  
7               (Public Law 113–146; 38 U.S.C. 1701 note)  
8               was completed.

9               “(ii) The date on which the last assess-  
10               ment under subsection (a) was completed.

11               “(B) Any recommendations regarding matters  
12               to be covered by subsequent assessments under sub-  
13               section (a), including any additional matters to in-  
14               clude for assessment or previously assessed matters  
15               to exclude.

16               “(2) Not later than 30 days after receiving a report  
17               under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall publish such re-  
18               port in the Federal Register and on a publicly accessible  
19               internet website of the Department.

20               “(3) Not later than 90 days after receiving a report  
21               under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the  
22               Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Rep-  
23               resentatives and the Senate a report outlining the feasi-  
24               bility, and advisability, of implementing the recomenda-  
25               tions made by the private sector entity or entities in such

1 report received, including an identification of the timeline,  
2 cost, and any legislative authorities necessary for such im-  
3 plementation.”.

4 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—The table of sections  
5 at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting  
6 after the item relating to section 1704 the following new  
7 item:

“1704A. Independent assessments of health care delivery systems and management processes.”.

8 (c) DEADLINE FOR INITIAL ASSESSMENT.—The ini-  
9 tial assessment under section 1704A of title 38, United  
10 States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall be com-  
11 pleted by not later than December 31, 2025.

Passed the House of Representatives November 16,  
2021.

Attest:

*Clerk.*

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