

118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 2410

To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide administrative support to providers of dental care who provide such care to veterans that is not furnished under such title, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a pilot program for the provision of dental care to certain veterans, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 30, 2023

Mr. BILIRAKIS (for himself, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. VAN DREW, Mr. FERGUSON, and Mr. WALTZ) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

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## A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide administrative support to providers of dental care who provide such care to veterans that is not furnished under such title, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a pilot program for the provision of dental care to certain 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Veterans Early Treat-  
3 ment for Chronic Ailment Resurgence through Examina-  
4 tions Act of 2023” or the “VET CARE Act of 2023”.

5 **SEC. 2. ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY PRO-**  
6 **VIDERS OF DENTAL CARE.**

7 Section 1712 of title 38, United States Code, is  
8 amended—

9 (1) by redesignating subsections (d) and (e) as  
10 subsections (e) and (f), respectively; and

11 (2) by inserting after subsection (c) the fol-  
12 lowing new subsection (d):

13 “(d)(1) The Secretary may furnish, to a provider of  
14 dental care described in paragraph (2), administrative  
15 support (including information for the provider to share  
16 with veterans regarding the dental insurance plan under  
17 section 1712C of this title) related to dental care described  
18 in paragraph (2).

19 “(2) Dental care described in this paragraph is—

20 “(A) provided to a veteran;

21 “(B) not furnished under a law administered by  
22 the Secretary; and”.

23 **SEC. 3. PILOT PROGRAM FOR THE PROVISION OF DENTAL**  
24 **CARE TO CERTAIN VETERANS.**

25 (a) PILOT PROGRAM.—

1           (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Vet-  
2           erans Affairs shall carry out a pilot program to pro-  
3           vide outpatient dental services and treatment, and  
4           related dental appliances, to eligible veterans en-  
5           rolled under subsection (c)(3), at no cost to such  
6           veterans.

7           (2) PURPOSE.—Under the pilot program, the  
8           Secretary shall determine whether there is a correla-  
9           tion between veterans receiving such services and  
10          treatment, and the veterans suffering fewer com-  
11          plications of chronic ailments, thereby yielding a  
12          lower cost of care.

13          (3) STEERING COMMITTEE: ESTABLISHMENT;  
14          DUTY; AUTHORITY.—The Secretary shall appoint a  
15          scientific steering committee to ensure that results  
16          of clinical trials conducted under the pilot program  
17          withstand the peer review process. To carry out such  
18          duty, the steering committee—

19                 (A) shall establish comprehensive ethical  
20                 and scientific protocols for clinical trials; and

21                 (B) may alter the definition of “eligible  
22                 veteran” in subsection (b).

23          (b) ELIGIBLE VETERAN DEFINED.—In this section,  
24          subject to subsection (a)(3)(B), the term “eligible vet-  
25          eran” means a veteran who—

1           (1) is enrolled in the system of annual patient  
2 enrollment under section 1705 of title 38, United  
3 States Code;

4           (2) is not eligible for dental care under section  
5 1712 of title 38, United States Code;

6           (3) the Secretary determines does not receive  
7 regular periodontal care;

8           (4) is between 40 and 70 years of age; and

9           (5) has been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

10          (c) APPLICATION; EVALUATION; DISQUALIFICATION;  
11 ENROLLMENT; CATEGORIZATION.—

12           (1) APPLICATION.—An eligible veteran may  
13 elect to apply for the pilot program.

14           (2) EVALUATION; DISQUALIFICATION.—An eli-  
15 gible veteran who applies for the pilot program shall  
16 receive an initial periodontal evaluation, including  
17 vertical bitewing radiographs. Any eligible veteran  
18 diagnosed with periodontal disease that requires sur-  
19 gery shall be disqualified from the pilot program.

20           (3) ENROLLMENT; CATEGORIZATION.—The Sec-  
21 retary shall enroll at least 1,500 eligible veterans  
22 who apply for the pilot program, giving preference to  
23 veterans with service-connected disabilities that in-  
24 creases in accordance with the veterans' disability

1 ratings under chapter 11 of title 38, United States  
2 Code, in a manner that ensures the following:

3 (A) One-third of eligible veterans enrolled  
4 in the pilot program shall have been diagnosed  
5 with no or mild periodontitis under paragraph  
6 (2).

7 (B) Two-thirds of eligible veterans enrolled  
8 in the pilot program shall have been diagnosed  
9 with moderate to severe periodontitis under  
10 paragraph (2).

11 (d) DURATION OF PROGRAM.—The Secretary shall  
12 carry out the pilot program during the four-year period  
13 beginning on the date that is 180 days after the effective  
14 date of this section.

15 (e) LOCATIONS.—The pilot program shall be carried  
16 out in five facilities of the Veterans Health Administra-  
17 tion, with one such facility in each of five Veterans Inte-  
18 grated Services Networks that the Secretary considers ap-  
19 propriate for the pilot program.

20 (f) PATIENT DISTRIBUTION.—Each facility shall  
21 serve not more than one-fourth and not fewer than one-  
22 sixth of the veterans enrolled in the pilot program, in ap-  
23 proximately even proportions of veterans categorized  
24 under subsection (c)(3).

25 (g) COURSE OF PROGRAM.—

1           (1) PERIODONTAL THERAPY.—The Secretary  
2 shall make timely and appropriate periodontal ther-  
3 apy available to veterans described in subsection  
4 (c)(3)(B).

5           (2) ELECTION OF TREATMENT.—Such veterans  
6 who elect to receive treatment shall be classified as  
7 “treated”.

8           (3) ANNUAL EVALUATIONS.—Each treated vet-  
9 eran shall receive an annual dental evaluation, dur-  
10 ing which the periodontal health of the treated vet-  
11 eran shall be reassessed and recorded exactly as at  
12 the initial evaluation under subsection (c)(2).

13           (4) HEALTH OUTCOME REPORTING.—For the  
14 duration of the pilot program, the Secretary shall  
15 collect and record data regarding the health of treat-  
16 ed veterans, including events, treatments, and out-  
17 comes, and make such data available for analysis by  
18 qualified researchers.

19 (h) EDUCATION.—

20           (1) HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS.—The Secretary  
21 shall provide standardized instructions to all physi-  
22 cians and dentists who work in facilities described in  
23 subsection (e) to ensure consistent evaluation and  
24 care for veterans enrolled in the pilot program in all  
25 such facilities.

1           (2) ENROLLED VETERANS.—The Secretary  
2           shall provide each veteran enrolled in the pilot pro-  
3           gram with an orientation, information before any  
4           care is provided under the pilot program, and an  
5           exit interview that includes information regarding  
6           how such veteran may obtain dental services and  
7           treatment after the end of the pilot program.

8           (i) EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH.—The Secretary shall  
9           notify those institutions of higher education (as that term  
10          is defined in section 102 of the Higher Education Act of  
11          1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002)) that offer degrees in periodontolo-  
12          gy of the pilot program so that such institutions may en-  
13          gage in similar studies regarding private periodontal care  
14          for veterans.

15          (j) REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the  
16          conclusion of the pilot program, the Secretary shall submit  
17          a report of findings to the Congress.

18          (k) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary shall administer  
19          the pilot program under such regulations as the Secretary  
20          shall prescribe, including best practices regarding in-  
21          formed consent and study registration.

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