

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1656

To modify the transition period between care and services provided under the Veterans Choice Program and care and services provided under the Veterans Community Care Program, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 23 (legislative day, MAY 22), 2019

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

A BILL

To modify the transition period between care and services provided under the Veterans Choice Program and care and services provided under the Veterans Community Care Program, 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 Affairs Sav-
5 ing Network Appointments From Upheaval Act” or the
6 “VA SNAFU Act”.

7 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

8 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) The Veterans Health Administration is the
2 largest integrated health care system in the United
3 States, providing care at approximately 1,250 health
4 care facilities, including 172 medical centers and
5 1,069 outpatient sites of care of varying complexity
6 (referred to as outpatient clinics), and serving ap-
7 proximately 9,000,000 veterans each year.

8 (2) On June 6, 2018, the John S. McCain III,
9 Daniel K. Akaka, and Samuel R. Johnson VA Main-
10 taining Internal Systems and Strengthening Inte-
11 grated Outside Networks Act of 2018 or the VA
12 MISSION Act of 2018 (Public Law 115–182) was
13 signed into law, establishing a new permanent Vet-
14 erans Community Care Program to replace the cur-
15 rent Veterans Choice Program under section 101 of
16 the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act
17 of 2014 (Public Law 113–146; 38 U.S.C. 1701
18 note).

19 (3) Section 7330C of title 38, United States
20 Code, as added by section 106 of the VA Mission
21 Act of 2018, requires the Department of Veterans
22 Affairs to conduct market assessments of community
23 care.

24 (4) Those assessments assess, among other fac-
25 tors, the following:

1 (A) The demand for health care from the
2 Department.

3 (B) The capacity of the Department to
4 provide health care.

5 (C) The capacity of providers under the
6 Veterans Community Care Program.

7 (D) The capacity of academic affiliates and
8 other Federal partners that provide health care
9 to veterans.

10 (5) Proposed access standards for the Veterans
11 Community Care Program, including a never-before-
12 tested drive-time standard, were released by the De-
13 partment in January 2019 and could impact half of
14 all veterans enrolled in the patient enrollment sys-
15 tem of the Department.

16 (6) The market assessments described in para-
17 graph (3) have not been completed by the Depart-
18 ment, so veterans using the new Veterans Commu-
19 nity Care Program will not have a full picture of
20 whether care in the community is as good or better
21 than care at facilities of the Department.

1 **SEC. 3. MODIFICATION OF TRANSITION FROM VETERANS**
2 **CHOICE PROGRAM TO VETERANS COMMU-**
3 **NITY CARE PROGRAM.**

4 (a) **EFFECTIVE DATE OF VETERANS COMMUNITY**
5 **CARE PROGRAM.**—Subsection (b) of section 101 of the
6 Caring for Our Veterans Act of 2018 (title I of Public
7 Law 115–182) is amended to read as follows:

8 “(b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—Section 1703 of title 38,
9 United States Code, as amended by subsection (a), shall
10 take effect on the date on which the first market area as-
11 sessment under section 7330C of title 38, United States
12 Code, as added by section 106(a) of this Act, is com-
13 pleted.”.

14 (b) **CONTINUATION OF VETERANS CHOICE PRO-**
15 **GRAM.**—Subsection (p) of section 101 of the Veterans Ac-
16 cess, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law
17 113–146; 38 U.S.C. 1701 note) is amended to read as
18 follows:

19 “(p) **AUTHORITY TO FURNISH CARE AND SERV-**
20 **ICES.**—

21 “(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Except as provided in para-
22 graph (2), the Secretary may not use the authority
23 under this section to furnish care and services after
24 June 6, 2019.

25 “(2) **EXCEPTION.**—The Secretary may use the
26 authority under this section to furnish care and

1 services after the date specified in paragraph (1) to
2 the extent necessary to provide care and services to
3 eligible veterans until the Secretary has entered into
4 contracts to provide care and services to such eligi-
5 ble veterans under section 1703 of title 38, United
6 States Code, as in effect on the date specified in sec-
7 tion 101(b) of the Caring for Our Veterans Act of
8 2018 (title I of Public Law 115–182).”.

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