STATE OF NEW YORK

7538--A

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

May 13, 2021

Introduced by M. of A. STERN, SIMPSON -- read once and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs -- recommitted to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs in accordance with Assembly Rule 3, sec. 2 -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

AN ACT to amend the executive law and the veterans' services law, in relation to veterans health care

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. The executive law is amended by adding a new section 361-a to read as follows:

§ 361-a. Veteran health care review. 1. The division, in consultation with the department of health, shall undertake a study regarding veteran health care as provided in this section. Such study shall be completed and reported to the legislature on or before December thirty-first, two thousand twenty-three.

2. The veteran health care review shall comprehensively study efforts that can be made to improve veterans' healthcare in the state including, but not be limited to:

(a) increasing access by veterans and their families to health care coverage and services;

(b) leveraging existing resources and structures in areas where veterans and their families are able to easily access such resources;

(c) ensuring the needs of veterans and their families are incorporated in all state efforts to expand access to affordable, quality health care;

(d) ensuring veterans and their families have access to mental health treatment, including for post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and suicide prevention;

(e) identifying all federal and other health benefits, coverage, and services available to veterans and their families; and

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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(f) more effectively coordinating with other local, state, and federal departments and agencies, health care providers, and health insurance programs to help veterans and their beneficiaries apply for coverage under such programs, including helping veterans overcome barriers within the health care system, to ensure enrollment in health plans and effective delivery and coordination of health services.

3. As part of the study, the division shall also:

(a) evaluate whether the needs of veterans and their families are met by existing health care and veterans' programs;

(b) provide recommendations for steps that could be taken to increase access to affordable, quality health care;

(c) consider the effects of designating health care navigators who would assist veterans in navigating the complexities of accessing healthcare benefits and services;

(d) evaluate the extent to which veterans in the state are experiencing delays in the receipt of healthcare services and ways to provide assistance to those veterans having difficulty receiving timely or adequate care; and

(e) evaluate the potential effectiveness of healthcare choice accounts, deposits into which shall be deductible from the veteran's state personal income tax, for veteran members of the organized militia, particularly those who served on active duty in a combat zone designated by the president of the United States and have a current disability that was incurred or aggravated as a result of such service. For purposes of this section the term "healthcare choice account" shall mean an individual savings account, owned by a veteran for the purpose of obtaining healthcare from the provider of their choice, when after making application to or attempting to schedule an appointment for healthcare services through the federal veterans health administration the veteran has been unable to receive such services in a timely manner.

§ 2. The veterans' services law is amended by adding a new section 18-a to read as follows:

§ 18-a. Veteran health care review. 1. The division, in consultation with the department of health, shall undertake a study regarding veteran health care as provided in this section. Such study shall be completed and reported to the legislature on or before December thirty-first, two thousand twenty-three.

2. The veteran health care review shall comprehensively study efforts that can be made to improve veterans' healthcare in the state including, but not be limited to:

(a) increasing access by veterans and their families to health care coverage and services;

(b) leveraging existing resources and structures in areas where veterans and their families are able to easily access such resources;

(c) ensuring the needs of veterans and their families are incorporated in all state efforts to expand access to affordable, quality health care;

(d) ensuring veterans and their families have access to mental health treatment, including for post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and suicide prevention;

(e) identifying all federal and other health benefits, coverage, and services available to veterans and their families; and

(f) more effectively coordinating with other local, state, and federal departments and agencies, health care providers, and health insurance programs to help veterans and their beneficiaries apply for coverage under such programs, including helping veterans overcome barriers within

the health care system, to ensure enrollment in health plans and effective delivery and coordination of health services.

3. As part of the study, the division shall also:

(a) evaluate whether the needs of veterans and their families are met by existing health care and veterans' programs;

(b) provide recommendations for steps that could be taken to increase access to affordable, quality health care;

(c) consider the effects of designating health care navigators who would assist veterans in navigating the complexities of accessing healthcare benefits and services;

(d) evaluate the extent to which veterans in the state are experiencing delays in the receipt of healthcare services and ways to provide assistance to those veterans having difficulty receiving timely or adequate care; and

(e) evaluate the potential effectiveness of healthcare choice accounts, deposits into which shall be deductible from the veteran's state personal income tax, for veteran members of the organized militia, particularly those who served on active duty in a combat zone designated by the president of the United States and have a current disability that was incurred or aggravated as a result of such service. For purposes of this section the term "healthcare choice account" shall mean an individual savings account, owned by a veteran for the purpose of obtaining healthcare from the provider of their choice, when after making application to or attempting to schedule an appointment for healthcare services through the federal veterans health administration the veteran has been unable to receive such services in a timely manner.

§ 3. This act shall take effect on the sixtieth day after it shall have become a law; provided, however, that section two of this act shall take effect on the same date and in the same manner as section 2 of part PP of chapter 56 of the laws of 2022 takes effect.