

113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3508

To amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the qualifications of hearing aid specialists of the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 15, 2013

Mr. DUFFY (for himself and Mr. WALZ) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the qualifications of hearing aid specialists of the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs, 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. APPOINTMENT OF HEARING AID SPECIALISTS**

4 **TO VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION.**

5 (a) HEARING AID SPECIALISTS.—

6 (1) APPOINTMENT.—Section 7401(3) of title
7 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting
8 “hearing aid specialists,” after “Audiologists,”.

1 (2) QUALIFICATIONS.—Section 7402(b) of such
2 title is amended—

3 (A) by redesignating paragraph (14) as
4 paragraph (15); and

5 (B) by inserting after paragraph (13) the
6 following new paragraph (14):

7 “(14) HEARING AID SPECIALIST.—To be eligible to
8 be appointed to a hearing aid specialist position, a person
9 must—

10 “(A) hold an associate’s degree in hearing in-
11 strument sciences, or its equivalent, from a college
12 or university approved by the Secretary, or have suc-
13 cessfully completed a hearing aid specialist appren-
14 ticeship program approved by the Secretary; and

15 “(B) be licensed as a hearing aid specialist, or
16 its equivalent, in a State.”.

17 (b) TREATMENT OF CERTAIN CURRENT SPECIAL-
18 ISTS.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—A hearing aid specialist de-
20 scribed in paragraph (2) shall be deemed to be eligi-
21 ble for appointment to a hearing aid specialist posi-
22 tion under sections 7401(3) and 7402(b)(14) of title
23 38, United States Code, as amended by subsection
24 (a).

1 (2) HEARING AID SPECIALIST DESCRIBED.—A
2 hearing aid specialist described in this paragraph is
3 a hearing aid specialist who—

4 (A) is not covered under section
5 7402(b)(14) of title 38, United States Code, as
6 amended by subsection (a); and

7 (B) during the two-year period ending on
8 the date of the enactment of this Act—

9 (i) held an unrevoked, unsuspended
10 hearing aid license, or its equivalent, in a
11 State; and

12 (ii) worked as a licensed hearing aid
13 specialist in a State.

14 (c) ANNUAL REPORT REQUIRED.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year
16 after the date of the enactment of this Act, and each
17 year thereafter, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs
18 shall submit to Congress a report on the following:

19 (A) Timely access to hearing health serv-
20 ices.

21 (B) Contracting policies with respect to
22 providing hearing health services in non-De-
23 partment facilities.

1 (2) **TIMELY ACCESS.**—With respect to the mat-
2 ters under paragraph (1)(A), the report shall include
3 the following:

4 (A) The staffing levels, as of the date of
5 the report, of audiologists, health technicians in
6 audiology, and hearing aid specialists in the
7 Veterans Health Administration.

8 (B) A description of how the Secretary
9 measures performance with respect to appoint-
10 ments and care relating to hearing health.

11 (C) The average time, as of the date of the
12 report, that a patient waits to receive an ap-
13 pointment, beginning on the date on which the
14 patient makes the request, for—

15 (i) a disability rating evaluation;

16 (ii) a primary hearing aid evaluation
17 and ordering of hearing aids;

18 (iii) dispensing of hearing aids; and

19 (iv) any follow-up hearing health ap-
20 pointment.

21 (D) The percentage of patients whose total
22 wait time described in subparagraph (C) for
23 both an initial and follow-up appointment is—

24 (i) less than 15 days;

25 (ii) between 15 days and 28 days;

- 1 (iii) between 29 days and 42 days;
2 (iv) between 43 days and 56 days; or
3 (v) exceeds 56 days.

4 (3) CONTRACTING POLICIES.—With respect to
5 the matters under paragraph (1)(B), the report shall
6 include the following:

7 (A) The number of patients that the Sec-
8 retary refers to non-Department audiologists
9 for initial hearing health diagnosis appoint-
10 ments.

11 (B) The number of patients described in
12 subparagraph (A) whom the Secretary refers to
13 non-Department hearing aid specialists for fol-
14 low-up hearing health care as described in para-
15 graph (2)(C).

16 (C) The policies of the Veterans Health
17 Administration regarding the referral of pa-
18 tients to non-Department hearing aid specialists
19 and how such policies will be applied under the
20 Patient-Centered Community Care Initiative.

21 (d) UPDATED HANDBOOK.—Not later than 180 days
22 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
23 shall update and reissue the handbook of the Veteran
24 Health Administration numbered 1170.02 and titled
25 “VHA Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Serv-

- 1 ices'' to reflect the requirements made by this section or
- 2 the amendments under this section.

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