

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5506

To establish a Rural Telehealth Access Task Force to determine how to address barriers to the adoption of telehealth technology and access to broadband internet access service in rural areas, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 8, 2021

Mr. PENCE (for himself and Ms. CRAIG) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Agriculture, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To establish a Rural Telehealth Access Task Force to determine how to address barriers to the adoption of telehealth technology and access to broadband internet access service in rural areas, 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 “Rural Telehealth Ac-
5 cess Task Force Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. RURAL TELEHEALTH ACCESS TASK FORCE.**

2 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 90 days after
3 the date of the enactment of this section, the Commission
4 shall establish a task force to be known as the “Rural
5 Telehealth Access Task Force” (in this section referred
6 to as the “Task Force”).

7 (b) MEMBERSHIP.—The Task Force shall be com-
8 posed of the following:

9 (1) The Assistant Secretary of Commerce for
10 Communications and Information.

11 (2) The Secretary of Agriculture.

12 (3) The Secretary of Health and Human Serv-
13 ices.

14 (4) The Chairperson of the Federal Commu-
15 nications Commission.

16 (5) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

17 (c) CHAIRPERSON.—The Chairperson of the Federal
18 Communications Commission shall serve as the Chair-
19 person of the Task Force.

20 (d) DUTIES.—The Task Force shall carry out the fol-
21 lowing duties:

22 (1) Identify barriers and opportunities to tele-
23 health service in rural areas.

24 (2) Identify barriers to, and opportunities for,
25 utilization of telehealth services in rural areas.

1 (3) Identify opportunities for coordination
2 among covered agencies and across high-cost pro-
3 grams to prevent duplication of effort or over-
4 building of existing or planned broadband internet
5 access service projects.

6 (4) Evaluate the adoption and usage rates of
7 telehealth services in rural areas.

8 (5) Evaluate how expanded access to telehealth
9 services can address health disparities in rural pa-
10 tients.

11 (6) Determine how to expand access to
12 broadband internet access service for telehealth serv-
13 ices in rural areas, including—

14 (A) rural health systems; and

15 (B) internet service providers.

16 (7) Develop recommendations on how to use
17 current high cost broadband resources to expand ac-
18 cess to telehealth services in rural areas.

19 (e) INFORMATION SHARING.—The covered agencies
20 shall share information with the Task Force on existing
21 or planned broadband internet access service projects that
22 may be useful in carrying out the duties of the Task Force
23 in subsection (c).

1 (f) REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the
2 date of enactment of this section, the Commission shall
3 submit to Congress a report that—

4 (1) details the findings and recommendations of
5 the Task Force; and

6 (2) includes an identification of other telehealth
7 issues or recommendations that the Task Forces de-
8 termines is appropriate.

9 (g) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

10 (1) BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS SERVICE.—
11 The term “broadband internet access service” has
12 the meaning give such term in section 8.1(b) of title
13 47, Code of Federal Regulations.

14 (2) COMMISSION.—The term “Commission”
15 means the Federal Communications Commission.

16 (3) COVERED AGENCY.—The term “covered
17 agency” means—

18 (A) the Commission;

19 (B) the Department of Agriculture;

20 (C) the Department of Health and Human
21 Services; and

22 (D) the National Telecommunications and
23 Information Administration.

24 (4) HIGH-COST PROGRAM.—The term “high-
25 cost program” includes the following:

1 (A) Subpart D of title 47, Code of Federal
2 Regulations (commonly known as “Universal
3 Service Support for High Cost Areas”).

4 (B) Subpart J of title 47, Code of Federal
5 Regulations (commonly known as the “Remote
6 Areas Fund”).

7 (C) Subpart K of title 47, Code of Federal
8 Regulations (commonly known as the “Inter-
9 state Common Line Support Mechanism for
10 Rate-of-Return Carriers”).

11 (D) Subpart L of title 47, Code of Federal
12 Regulations (commonly known as the “Mobility
13 Fund”).

14 (E) Subpart M of title 47, Code of Federal
15 Regulations (commonly known as the “High
16 Cost Loop Support for Rate-of-Return Car-
17 riers”).

18 (F) The connected care pilot program (85
19 Fed. Reg. 19896).

20 (G) Section 1734 of title 7, Code of Fed-
21 eral Regulations (commonly known as the “Dis-
22 tance Learning and Telemedicine Grant Pro-
23 gram”).

24 (H) The COVID–19 telehealth program
25 (86 Fed. Reg. 8356).

1 (I) Section 902 of the Consolidated Appro-
2 priations Act, 2021 (Public Law 116–133).

3 (J) Section 905(c) of the Consolidated Ap-
4 propriations Act, 2021 (Public Law 116–133).

5 (5) RURAL; RURAL AREA.—The terms “rural”
6 and “rural area” mean any area other than a city
7 or town that has a population greater than 50,000
8 inhabitants.

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