

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 3255

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase the number of Vet Centers in certain States based on population metrics, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 18, 2021

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

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase the number of Vet Centers in certain States based on population metrics, 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 Census-En-
5 abled National Treatment Equitable Resource Supplement
6 for Mental Health Act of 2021” or the “Vet CENTERS
7 for Mental Health Act of 2021”.

1 **SEC. 2. INCREASE IN NUMBER OF VET CENTERS IN CER-**
2 **TAIN STATES BASED ON POPULATION**
3 **METRICS.**

4 (a) INCREASE IN NUMBER.—If the Secretary of Vet-
5 erans Affairs determines that a State meets each require-
6 ment described in subsection (c), (d), or (e), the Secretary
7 shall ensure that the number of covered Vet Centers lo-
8 cated in the State is increased from the number of covered
9 Vet Centers that were located in the State on December
10 31, 2020, through the establishment of not less than one
11 additional covered Vet Center within the State, as applica-
12 ble.

13 (b) EXISTING FACILITIES.—In establishing an addi-
14 tional covered Vet Center pursuant to a determination
15 under subsection (a), the Secretary may establish the cov-
16 ered Vet Center at a facility made available to the Sec-
17 retary by the head of a State, local government, or feder-
18 ally recognized Indian tribe to carry out this section, re-
19 gardless of whether such facility is made available at a
20 cost to the Secretary.

21 (c) REQUIREMENTS.—The requirements described in
22 this subsection are, with respect to the 2020 calendar
23 year, as follows:

24 (1) The total population of the State exceeded
25 6,000,000, as determined by the Bureau of the Cen-
26 sus.

1 (2) The average population density of the State
2 exceeded 200 individuals per square mile, as deter-
3 mined by the Bureau of the Census.

4 (3) The total veteran population in the State
5 was greater than 250,000 veterans, as determined
6 by the Secretary.

7 (4) The ratio of veteran population in the State
8 to covered Vet Centers located in the State exceeded
9 50,000 veterans per one covered Vet Center, as de-
10 termined by the Secretary (regardless of the number
11 of veterans who received services at covered Vet
12 Centers located in the State during such year).

13 (d) ALTERNATIVE REQUIREMENTS.—The require-
14 ments described in this subsection are as follows:

15 (1) The State does not share a land border with
16 another State.

17 (2) The State is located not less than 2,000
18 miles from the contiguous United States.

19 (3) There is no covered Vet Center located in
20 the State.

21 (e) ADDITIONAL ALTERNATIVE REQUIREMENTS.—
22 The requirements described in this subsection are as fol-
23 lows:

24 (1) There are fewer than five covered Vet Cen-
25 ters located in the State.

1 (2) The land area of the State exceeds 75,000
2 square miles.

3 (3) During the 2020 calendar year, the total
4 population of the State exceeded 5,000,000 individ-
5 uals, as determined by the Bureau of the Census.

6 (4) During the 2020 calendar year, the ratio of
7 veteran population in the State to covered Vet Cen-
8 ters located in the State exceeded 75,000 veterans
9 per one covered Vet Center, as determined by the
10 Secretary (regardless of the number of veterans who
11 received services at covered Vet Centers located in
12 the State during such year).

13 (f) COMMUNITY-BASED OUTPATIENT CLINICS.—The
14 Secretary shall establish a covered community-based out-
15 patient clinic in each State that the Secretary determines
16 meets the following requirements:

17 (1) The State does not share a land border with
18 another State.

19 (2) The State is located not less than 2,000
20 miles from the contiguous United States.

21 (3) There is no covered community-based out-
22 patient clinic located in the State.

23 (g) DEADLINE.—The Secretary shall establish such
24 additional covered Vet Centers as may be required pursu-
25 ant to a determination under subsection (a), and such cov-

1 ered community-based outpatient clinics as may be re-
2 quired pursuant to a determination under subsection (f),
3 by not later than two years after the date of the enactment
4 of this Act.

5 (h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

6 (1) COVERED COMMUNITY-BASED OUTPATIENT
7 CLINIC.—The term “covered community-based out-
8 patient clinic” means a community-based outpatient
9 clinic of the Department of Veterans Affairs that is
10 scheduled to be open for the provision of community-
11 based outpatient services for a minimum of eight
12 hours per day during five days of the week, except
13 that the community-based outpatient clinic may be
14 open for less than such minimum period on a tem-
15 porary basis as a result of a Federal holiday, weath-
16 er concern, safety concern, pandemic, or for such
17 other reasons as may be determined appropriate by
18 the Secretary.

19 (2) COVERED VET CENTER.—The term “cov-
20 ered Vet Center”—

21 (A) means a Vet Center, as such term is
22 defined in section 1712A of title 38, United
23 States Code, that is scheduled to be open for
24 the provision of services under such section for
25 a minimum of eight hours per day during five

1 days of the week, except that the Vet Center
2 may be open for less than such minimum period
3 on a temporary basis as a result of a Federal
4 holiday, weather concern, safety concern, pan-
5 demic, or for such other reasons as may be de-
6 termined appropriate by the Secretary; and

7 (B) does not include a Vet Center
8 outstation.

9 (3) STATE.—The term “State” has the mean-
10 ing given such term in section 101 of title 38,
11 United States Code.

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