

116TH CONGRESS 1ST SESSION

S. 1222

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to provide hospital care and medical services to veterans in the Freely Associated States of the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia, and to conduct a study on the feasibility and advisability of establishing regional offices, suboffices, contact units, or other subordinate offices of the Department of Veterans Affairs in the Freely Associated States to provide such care and services, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

April 29, 2019

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

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to provide hospital care and medical services to veterans in the Freely Associated States of the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia, and to conduct a study on the feasibility and advisability of establishing regional offices, suboffices, contact units, or other subordinate offices of the Department of Veterans Affairs in the Freely Associated States to provide such care and services, 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 "Compact of Free Asso-
5	ciation Veterans Review Act of 2019" or the "COFA Vet-
6	erans Review Act of 2019".
7	SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.
8	In this Act:
9	(1) Appropriate committees of con-
10	GRESS.—The term "appropriate committees of Con-
11	gress' means—
12	(A) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs
13	and the Committee on Appropriations of the
14	Senate; and
15	(B) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs
16	and the Committee on Appropriations of the
17	House of Representatives.
18	(2) DEPARTMENT.—The term "Department"
19	means the Department of Veterans Affairs.
20	(3) Freely associated states.—The term
21	"Freely Associated States" means the Republic of
22	Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the
23	Federated States of Micronesia, which have each en-
24	tered into a Compact of Free Association with the
25	United States.

- 1 (4) HOSPITAL CARE; MEDICAL SERVICES.—The
 2 terms "hospital care" and "medical services" have
 3 the meanings given those terms in section 1701 of
 4 title 38, United States Code.
 - (5) Patient aligned care team" means a team of health care professionals of the Department that provides comprehensive primary care in partnership with the patient and manages and coordinates comprehensive health care services consistent with agreed-upon goals of care.
 - (6) Project ECHO EDUCATION AND TRAIN-ING.—The term "Project ECHO education and training" means education and training provided under the Project Extension for Community Health Outcomes.
 - (7) Secretary.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.
 - (8) SERVICE-CONNECTED; NON-SERVICE-CONNECTED.—The terms "service-connected" and "non-service-connected" have the meanings given those terms in section 101 of title 38, United States Code.
 - (9) VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATION.—The term "veterans service organization" means any organization recognized by the Secretary for the rep-

1	resentation of veterans under section 5902 of title
2	38, United States Code.
3	SEC. 3. PILOT PROGRAM ON PROVIDING HOSPITAL CARE
4	AND MEDICAL SERVICES TO VETERANS RE
5	SIDING IN THE FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES
6	(a) Pilot Program Required.—Commencing not
7	later than January 1, 2020, the Secretary shall carry out
8	a pilot program to provide hospital care, medical services
9	and other related services to veterans residing in the Free-
10	ly Associated States.
11	(b) Duration.—The Secretary shall carry out the
12	pilot program required by subsection (a) during the three-
13	year period beginning on the date of the commencement
14	of the pilot program.
15	(c) Services Provided.—In carrying out the pilot
16	program required by subsection (a), the Secretary shall
17	ensure that the pilot program—
18	(1) emphasizes the use of telehealth;
19	(2) provides Project ECHO education and
20	training to employees of the Department responsible
21	for carrying out the pilot program;
22	(3) includes the use of primary and specialty
23	care provided by patient aligned care teams and spe-
24	cialty care providers: and

1	(4) includes the provision of compensation and
2	pension medical examinations.
3	(d) Outreach Program.—As part of the pilot pro-
4	gram required by subsection (a), the Secretary shall con-
5	duct a program of outreach to inform veterans in the
6	Freely Associated States about the pilot program and the
7	services available under the pilot program.
8	(e) Authorization of Appropriations.—There
9	are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary such
10	funds as may be necessary to carry out the pilot program.
11	SEC. 4. STUDY ON PROVIDING HOSPITAL CARE AND MED-
12	ICAL SERVICES TO VETERANS RESIDING IN
12 13	THE FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES.
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13 14	THE FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES. (a) STUDY REQUIRED.—
131415	THE FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES. (a) STUDY REQUIRED.— (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall conduct
13 14 15 16	THE FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES. (a) STUDY REQUIRED.— (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall conduct a study on the feasibility and advisability of establishments.
13 14 15 16 17	THE FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES. (a) STUDY REQUIRED.— (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall conduct a study on the feasibility and advisability of establishing one or more regional offices, suboffices, con-
13 14 15 16 17 18	THE FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES. (a) STUDY REQUIRED.— (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall conduct a study on the feasibility and advisability of establishing one or more regional offices, suboffices, contact units, or other subordinate offices of the De-
13 14 15 16 17 18	THE FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES. (a) STUDY REQUIRED.— (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall conduct a study on the feasibility and advisability of establishing one or more regional offices, suboffices, contact units, or other subordinate offices of the Department in the remote Pacific islands, including the
13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20	the freely associated states. (a) Study Required.— (1) In General.—The Secretary shall conduct a study on the feasibility and advisability of establishing one or more regional offices, suboffices, contact units, or other subordinate offices of the Department in the remote Pacific islands, including the Freely Associated States, to provide hospital care

- 1 (2) Considerations and analysis.—In con-2 ducting the study required by paragraph (1), the 3 Secretary shall consider and analyze the following: 4 (A) The results of the pilot program re-5 quired by section 3(a). 6 (B) The ability of the Department to pro-7 vide hospital care and medical services to vet-8 erans residing or traveling outside the United 9 States, including veterans residing in the Freely 10 Associated States. 11 (C) The feasibility, efficacy, and advis-12 ability of building clinics or leasing space on 13 embassy compounds or in consulate facilities of 14 the United States in the Freely Associated 15 States or insular areas for the purposes of pro-16 viding hospital care and medical services to vet-17 erans residing or traveling outside the United 18 States, including veterans residing in the Freely 19 Associated States.
 - (D) The feasibility and advisability of providing services, such as telehealth, Project ECHO education and training, primary and specialty care provided by patient aligned care teams and specialty care providers, and compensation and pension medical examinations, to

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1	veterans residing in the Freely Associated
2	States.
3	(E) Updates to census data of the Depart-
4	ment on the number of veterans residing in the
5	Freely Associated States to determine whether
6	such data supports the establishment of a per-
7	manent patient aligned care team of the De-
8	partment based in the Freely Associated States.
9	(F) With respect to the United States and
10	the Freely Associated States, the data stand-
11	ards for—
12	(i) patient medical record information;
13	and
14	(ii) the electronic interchange of such
15	information.
16	(G) The feasibility and advisability of pro-
17	viding hospital care and medical services to vet-
18	erans residing in the Freely Associated States
19	for non-service-connected disabilities.
20	(H) The feasibility and advisability of pro-
21	viding continuity of care to veterans for service-
22	connected disabilities that cannot be treated by
23	the Department within a regional office, sub-
24	office, contact unit, or other subordinate office

1	of the Department in the remote Pacific is-
2	lands, including the Freely Associated States.
3	(I) Such other matters as the Secretary
4	considers appropriate.
5	(3) Cooperation and consultation.—The
6	Secretary shall conduct the study required by para-
7	graph (1)—
8	(A) in cooperation with—
9	(i) the Secretary of Defense;
10	(ii) the Secretary of Health and
11	Human Services;
12	(iii) the Secretary of the Interior;
13	(iv) the Secretary of State; and
14	(v) such other heads of Federal agen-
15	cies as may be interested in the study; and
16	(B) in consultation with—
17	(i) such representatives of State and
18	local governments as the Secretary deter-
19	mines may be interested in the study;
20	(ii) each government of the Freely As-
21	sociated States;
22	(iii) veterans service organizations;
23	(iv) such nongovernmental organiza-
24	tions as the Secretary considers appro-
25	priate; and

1	(v) the public.
2	(b) Report Required.—
3	(1) In general.—Not later than 270 days
4	after the date on which the pilot program required
5	by section 3(a) terminates, the Secretary shall sub-
6	mit to the appropriate committees of Congress a re-
7	port on the findings of the Secretary with respect to
8	the study required by subsection (a)(1).
9	(2) Contents.—The report submitted under
10	paragraph (1) shall include the following:
11	(A) A description of the processes required
12	for the Secretary to establish one or more re-
13	gional offices, suboffices, contact units, or other
14	subordinate offices in the Freely Associated
15	States.
16	(B) The number of veterans expected to
17	receive hospital care and medical services pro-
18	vided under laws administered by the Secretary
19	in the Freely Associated States.
20	(C) A resource management plan for the
21	Department to provide hospital care and med-
22	ical services in the Freely Associated States, in-
23	cluding an assessment of the effect that such

provision would have on the Department of Vet-

erans Affairs Pacific Islands Health Care System.

- (D) An explanation of the guidelines that the Department will use to provide hospital care and medical services under laws administered by the Secretary in the Freely Associated States, including an explanation of benefits for service-connected and non-service-connected disabilities.
- (E) An explanation of how the Department expects to provide continuity of care to veterans for service-connected disabilities that cannot be treated within a regional office, suboffice, contact unit, or other subordinate office in the Freely Associated States, including how the Department plans to communicate with such veterans regarding their continuity of care.
- (F) An assessment of the budgetary resources required to establish and provide hospital care and medical services to veterans in the Freely Associated States during the 10-year period beginning on the date of the submittal of the report.

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