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

Mr. Pence introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on __________________________

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 Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

2. SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Rural Telehealth Access Task Force Act”.

117th CONGRESS 2d Session

H. R. 8169
SEC. 2. RURAL TELEHEALTH ACCESS TASK FORCE.

(a) Establishment.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this section, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall establish a task force to be known as the “Rural Telehealth Access Task Force” (in this section referred to as the “Task Force”).

(b) Membership.—The Task Force shall be composed of the following:

(1) The Secretary of Health and Human Services, who shall serve as the Chairperson of the Task Force.

(2) The Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration.

(3) The Administrator for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

(4) The Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information.

(5) The Secretary of Agriculture.

(6) The Chairperson of the Federal Communications Commission.

(7) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(c) Duties.—The Task Force shall carry out the following duties:

(1) Identify barriers and opportunities to tele-health service in rural areas.
(2) Identify barriers to, and opportunities for, utilization of telehealth services in rural areas.

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

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

(5) Evaluate how expanded access to telehealth services can address health disparities in rural patients.

(6) Determine how to expand access to broadband internet access service for telehealth services in rural areas, including—

(A) rural health systems; and

(B) internet service providers.

(7) Develop recommendations on how to use current high cost broadband resources to expand access to telehealth services in rural areas.

(d) INFORMATION SHARING.—The covered agencies shall share information with the Task Force on existing or planned broadband internet access service projects that may be useful in carrying out the duties of the Task Force specified in subsection (e).
(e) REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this section, the Commission shall submit to Congress a report that—

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

(2) includes an identification of other telehealth issues or recommendations that the Task Forces determines is appropriate.

(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

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

(2) COVERED AGENCY.—The term “covered agency” means—

(A) the Department of Health and Human Services;

(B) the Federal Communications Commission;

(C) the Department of Agriculture; and

(D) the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

(3) HIGH-COST PROGRAM.—The term “high-cost program” includes the following:
(A) Subpart D of title 47, Code of Federal Regulations (commonly known as “Universal Service Support for High Cost Areas”).

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

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

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

(E) Subpart M of title 47, Code of Federal Regulations (commonly known as the “High Cost Loop Support for Rate-of-Return Carriers”).


(G) Section 1734 of title 7, Code of Federal Regulations (commonly known as the “Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant Program”).

(I) Section 902 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Public Law 116–133).

(J) Section 905(c) of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Public Law 116–133).

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