

H.R. 4625, VA Caregiver Transparency Act

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on July 28, 2021

By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars	2022	2022-2026	2022-2031
Direct Spending (Outlays)	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0
Increase or Decrease (-) in the Deficit	0	0	0
Spending Subject to Appropriation (Outlays)	*	1	not estimated
Statutory pay-as-you-go procedures apply?	No	Mandate Effects	
Increases on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2032?	No	Contains intergovernmental mandate?	No
		Contains private-sector mandate?	No
* = between zero and \$500,000.			

H.R. 4625 would require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to submit to the Congress a quarterly report on participation in the department's caregiver program. Under that program, VA provides financial assistance and support services to caregivers of eligible veterans who were seriously injured in the line of duty. The report would include information about approvals and denials of applications and the outcomes of cases where veterans appeal the denials of their applications. The bill also would require VA to recommend ways of improving the appeals process. Using information about similar reports, CBO estimates that satisfying those requirements would cost \$1 million over the 2022-2026 period. Such spending would be subjected to the availability of appropriated funds.

The bill also would require VA to accelerate the expansion of eligibility for the program. Under current law, people who care for veterans who were seriously injured before May 7, 1975, or after September 11, 2001, are eligible for the program. VA is required to expand eligibility for caregivers of veterans who were injured between those dates within two years of certifying to the Congress that the department has implemented an information technology system that fully supports the family caregiver program. The bill would require VA to immediately expand eligibility when the department submits the certification. Although it has not certified that the system is ready, VA plans to expand the program to those veterans in 2022. Because the required expansion codifies VA's current plan, implementing that provision would not affect the federal budget.



Under the bill, appeals of decisions to deny benefits in the caregiver program would be adjudicated through the department's clinical appeals process rather than by the Board of Veterans' Appeals. Because VA currently adjudicates appeals through the clinical appeals process, the bill would codify current law. Thus, CBO estimates that implementing that requirement would not affect the federal budget.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Etaf Khan. The estimate was reviewed by Leo Lex, Deputy Director of Budget Analysis.