

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1484

To authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to award grants to States to provide safety measures to social workers and other similar professionals who work with at-risk populations, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 9, 2017

Ms. SINEMA (for herself and Ms. STEFANIK) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to award grants to States to provide safety measures to social workers and other similar professionals who work with at-risk populations, 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 “Social Worker Safety
5 Act of 2017”.

6 **SEC. 2. SOCIAL WORKER SAFETY GRANT PROGRAM.**

7 (a) GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary of Health
8 and Human Services may award grants to States to pro-

1 vide safety measures to social workers and other similar
2 professionals (as designated by the Secretary) working
3 with violent, illicit drug-using, or other at-risk populations.

4 (b) USE OF FUNDS.—Grants awarded pursuant to
5 subsection (a) may be used to provide or support the fol-
6 lowing safety measures:

7 (1)(A) The procurement and installation of
8 safety equipment, including communications or re-
9 cording systems, such as cell phones, wearable track-
10 ing devices with GPS/Bluetooth locator, or panic
11 buttons used for supervised foster care visits and
12 other client visits to assist agencies in locating staff.

13 (B) Technical assistance and training for safety
14 communications.

15 (2) Training sessions and exercises for self-de-
16 fense and crisis, together with such organizations as
17 local law enforcement.

18 (3) Facility safety improvements.

19 (4) Training in cultural competency, including
20 linguistic training, and training on strategies for de-
21 escalating a situation that could turn volatile.

22 (5) Training to help work with clients who—

23 (A) have serious mental and substance use
24 disorders; or

1 (B) have behavioral problems and need
2 help coping.

3 (6) Educational resources and materials to
4 train staff on safety and awareness measures.

5 (7) Support services, counseling, and additional
6 resources for social workers who have experienced
7 safety issues or trauma-related incidents in the
8 workplace.

9 (8) Installation of a local data incident tracking
10 system to monitor, prevent, and mitigate future of-
11 fenses against social workers.

12 (9) Other policy developments and implementa-
13 tion activities determined by the Secretary for social
14 work safety training, resources, and support.

15 (c) APPLICATION.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—A State seeking a grant
17 under subsection (a) shall submit an application to
18 the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and ac-
19 companied by such additional information as the
20 Secretary may require.

21 (2) CONTENTS.—Each application submitted
22 pursuant to paragraph (1) shall—

23 (A) describe the type of agencies that will
24 receive funding through the grant and type of
25 work to be done by such agencies;

1 (B) describe the specific activities for
2 which the grant is sought and include a pro-
3 gram budget; and

4 (C) contain an assurance that the appli-
5 cant will evaluate the effectiveness of the safety
6 measures provided through the grant.

7 (d) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under subsection
8 (a), the Secretary shall give priority to applicants that—
9 (1) demonstrate the greatest need based on
10 documented incidents; and

11 (2) seek to provide assistance to multiple agen-
12 cies.

13 (e) QUALITY ASSURANCE AND COST EFFECTIVE-
14 NESS.—The Secretary shall establish guidelines for ensur-
15 ing the quality and cost effectiveness of the safety meas-
16 ures funded under this section.

17 (f) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary may
18 provide technical assistance to recipients of a grant under
19 this section with respect to planning, developing, imple-
20 menting, and sustaining safety measures through the
21 grant.

22 (g) REPORT REQUIREMENT.—States receiving a
23 grant under this section shall submit to the Secretary, not
24 later than 2 years after such receipt, a report that in-
25 cludes—

1 (1) an assessment of the activities funded in
2 whole or in part with the grant;

3 (2) the range and scope of training opportuni-
4 ties provided through training programs funded in
5 whole or in part through a grant under this section,
6 including the numbers and percentages of social
7 workers engaged in such training programs; and

8 (3) the incidence of threats to social workers, if
9 any, and the strategies used to address their safety.

10 (h) NON-FEDERAL SHARE.—With respect to the
11 costs of safety measures to be provided pursuant to a
12 grant under subsection (a), the State receiving the grant
13 shall agree to make available (directly or through dona-
14 tions from public or private entities) non-Federal contribu-
15 tions toward such costs in an amount that is \$1 for each
16 \$1 of Federal funds awarded through the grant.

17 (i) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

18 (1) The term “Secretary” means the Secretary
19 of Health and Human Services.

20 (2) The term “social work” means—

21 (A) the professional activity of helping in-
22 dividuals, groups, or communities to enhance or
23 restore capacity for social and psychosocial
24 functioning, and to create societal conditions fa-
25 vorable to such enhancement or restoration; and

1 (B) the professional application of values,
2 principles, and techniques related to the activi-
3 ties described in subparagraph (A), including—

4 (i) diagnosing mental and emotional
5 disorders and treating individuals, families,
6 or groups for such disorders; and

7 (ii) helping individuals, families, or
8 groups to obtain tangible services, includ-
9 ing personal, protective, informational, ad-
10 visory, community, or maintenance services
11 in order to improve the overall well-being
12 of individuals.

13 (3) The term “social worker” means an indi-
14 vidual with a baccalaureate, master’s, or doctoral de-
15 gree in social work from an institution of higher
16 education who uses knowledge and skills to provide
17 social work services for individuals, families, groups,
18 communities, organizations, or society in general.

19 (j) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—To carry
20 out this section, there is authorized to be appropriated
21 \$5,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2018 through 2022.

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