

116TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 1685

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to improve education opportunities for physician assistants, and for other purposes.

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IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 12, 2019

Ms. BASS introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

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## A BILL

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to improve education opportunities for physician assistants, 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 “Physician Assistant  
5 Higher Education Modernization Act of 2019”.

1 **SEC. 2. INSTITUTING BORROWING PARITY FOR PHYSICIAN**  
2 **ASSISTANT STUDENTS UNDER THE FEDERAL**  
3 **DIRECT LOAN PROGRAM.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 455 of the Higher Edu-  
5 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087e) is amended by add-  
6 ing at the end the following:

7 “(r) INSTITUTING BORROWING PARITY FOR PHYSI-  
8 CIAN ASSISTANT STUDENTS.—Notwithstanding section  
9 428H(d)(2)(A), the maximum annual amount of Federal  
10 Direct Unsubsidized Stafford Loans that a graduate stu-  
11 dent in a physician assistant education program (as de-  
12 fined in section 799B of the Public Health Service Act  
13 (42 U.S.C. 295p)) may borrow in any academic year (as  
14 defined in section 481(a)(2)) or its equivalent shall be—

15 “(1) \$40,000 in the first academic year of such  
16 program;

17 “(2) \$40,000 in the second academic year of  
18 such program; and

19 “(3) \$15,000 in the third academic year of such  
20 program.”.

21 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by  
22 this section shall apply with respect to award years begin-  
23 ning more than 60 days after the date of enactment of  
24 this Act.

1 **SEC. 3. MAKING PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS ELIGIBLE FOR IN-**  
 2 **CENTIVES WHEN SERVING AS PRIMARY CARE**  
 3 **PROVIDERS OR FACULTY MEMBERS.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 428K of the Higher Edu-  
 5 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1078–11) is amended—

6 (1) in subsection (b), by adding at the end the  
 7 following:

8 “(19) PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS.—The individual  
 9 is a physician assistant employed full-time—

10 “(A) as a physician assistant in a clinical  
 11 setting providing primary care services; or

12 “(B) as a member of the physician assist-  
 13 ant faculty at a physician assistant education  
 14 program (as defined in section 799B of the  
 15 Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 295p)).”;

16 (2) in subsection (g), by adding at the end the  
 17 following:

18 “(11) PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT.—The term ‘phy-  
 19 sician assistant’ means an individual who—

20 “(A) graduated from a physician assistant  
 21 education program (as defined in section 799B  
 22 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.  
 23 295p));

24 “(B) is certified as a physician assistant by  
 25 the National Commission on the Certification of

1 Physician Assistants or any successor organiza-  
2 tion; and

3 “(C) either—

4 “(i) holds a valid and unrestricted li-  
5 cense to practice medicine as a physician  
6 assistant in the State in which the physi-  
7 cian assistant practices in a clinical set-  
8 ting; or

9 “(ii) is qualified for licensure in the  
10 State where the individual is employed as  
11 a full-time physician assistant faculty  
12 member of a physician assistant education  
13 program (as defined in section 799B of the  
14 Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.  
15 295p)).”; and

16 (3) in subsection (h), by striking “fiscal year  
17 2009” and inserting “fiscal year 2020”.

18 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by  
19 this section shall apply with respect to employment occur-  
20 ring on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

1 **SEC. 4. GRANTS FOR PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAMS AT**  
2 **HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNI-**  
3 **VERSITIES AND PREDOMINANTLY BLACK IN-**  
4 **STITUTIONS.**

5 (a) HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVER-  
6 SITIES.—Section 723 of the Higher Education Act of  
7 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1136a) is amended—

8 (1) in subsection (a)(1), by inserting “physician  
9 assistant studies,” after “allied health,”;

10 (2) in subsection (b)(2)(A), by inserting “physi-  
11 cian assistant studies,” after “allied health,”; and

12 (3) in subsection (d)—

13 (A) in paragraph (4), by inserting “physi-  
14 cian assistant studies,” after “allied health,”;

15 (B) in paragraph (11), by striking “and”  
16 at the end;

17 (C) by redesignating paragraph (12) as  
18 paragraph (13); and

19 (D) by inserting after paragraph (11) the  
20 following:

21 “(12) in the case of a grant for a physician as-  
22 sistant education program (as defined in section  
23 799B of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.  
24 295p))—

25 “(A) creating or improving facilities for  
26 Internet or other distance education tech-

nologies, including purchase or rental of telecommunications technology equipment or services; and

“(B) collaborating with other institutions of higher education to expand postbaccalaureate degree offerings; and”.

(b) PREDOMINANTLY BLACK INSTITUTIONS.—Section 724 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1136b) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(1), by inserting “physician assistant studies,” after “allied health,”;

(2) in subsection (b)(2)(A), by inserting “physician assistant studies,” after “allied health,”; and

(3) in subsection (d)—

(A) in paragraph (4), by inserting “physician assistant studies,” after “allied health,”;

(B) by redesignating paragraph (12) as paragraph (13); and

(C) by inserting after paragraph (11) the following:

“(12) in the case of a grant for a physician assistant education program (as defined in section 799B of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 295p))—

1           “(A) creating or improving facilities for  
 2           Internet or other distance education tech-  
 3           nologies, including purchase or rental of tele-  
 4           communications technology equipment or serv-  
 5           ices; and

6           “(B) collaborating with other institutions  
 7           of higher education to expand postbaccalaureate  
 8           degree offerings; and”.

9           (c) EXTENSION OF AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIA-  
 10          TIONS.—Subsections (a) and (b) of section 725 of the  
 11          Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1136c) are each  
 12          amended by striking “fiscal year 2009” and inserting “fis-  
 13          cal year 2020”.

14       **SEC. 5. PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT POSTBACCALAUREATE OP-**  
 15                               **PORTUNITIES FOR HISPANIC AMERICANS.**

16           (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 514 of the Higher Edu-  
 17          cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1102c) is amended by add-  
 18          ing at the end the following:

19           “(d) PRIORITY FOR PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDU-  
 20          CATION PROGRAMS.—The Secretary shall give preference  
 21          to an application by an eligible institution for a grant  
 22          under this part that demonstrates that the grant funds  
 23          awarded under this part will be used to support physician  
 24          assistant education programs (as defined in section 799B  
 25          of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 295p)).”.

1 (b) EXTENSION OF AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIA-  
 2 TIONS.—Section 528(a)(2) of the Higher Education Act  
 3 of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1103g(a)(2)) is amended—

4 (1) by striking “\$100,000,000 for fiscal year  
 5 2009 and”; and

6 (2) by inserting after “such sums as may be  
 7 necessary for” the following: “fiscal year 2020 and”.

8 **SEC. 6. GRANTS TO RURAL SERVING INSTITUTIONS OF**  
 9 **HIGHER EDUCATION FOR PHYSICIAN ASSIST-**  
 10 **ANT EDUCATION PROGRAMS.**

11 Part Q of title VIII of the Higher Education Act of  
 12 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1161q) is amended—

13 (1) in section 861(b), by striking “For the pur-  
 14 poses of this section” and inserting “For the pur-  
 15 poses of this part”; and

16 (2) by inserting after section 861 the following:

17 **“SEC. 862. GRANTS TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT AND**  
 18 **EXPANSION OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDU-**  
 19 **CATION PROGRAMS AT RURAL-SERVING IN-**  
 20 **STITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.**

21 “(a) GRANTS.—

22 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary is authorized  
 23 to award grants on a competitive basis to a rural-  
 24 serving institution of higher education or a consor-  
 25 tium of such institutions—

1           “(A) to increase, for students from rural  
2           areas, enrollment and graduation rates for  
3           postbaccalaureate physician assistant education  
4           programs; and

5           “(B) to train physician assistants in rural  
6           areas through the development of new physician  
7           assistant education programs and the expansion  
8           of existing physician assistant education pro-  
9           grams in rural areas.

10          “(2) DURATION.—A grant awarded under this  
11          section shall be awarded for a period of not longer  
12          than 3 years.

13          “(3) LIMITATIONS.—A rural-serving institution  
14          of higher education or a consortium of such institu-  
15          tions shall not receive more than one grant under  
16          this section.

17          “(b) APPLICATIONS.—

18               “(1) IN GENERAL.—Each rural-serving institu-  
19               tion of higher education or consortium of such insti-  
20               tutions desiring a grant under this section shall sub-  
21               mit to the Secretary an application at such time, in  
22               such manner, and containing such information as  
23               the Secretary may require.

24               “(2) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this  
25               section, the Secretary shall give priority to applica-

1        tions that demonstrate the most potential and pro-  
2        pose the most promising and innovative approaches  
3        for—

4                “(A) creating new physician assistant edu-  
5                cation programs in rural areas;

6                “(B) increasing the number of physician  
7                assistants that practice medicine in rural areas;

8                “(C) meeting the employment needs of re-  
9                gional employers of physician assistants with  
10              graduates of physician assistant education pro-  
11              grams at rural-serving institutions of higher  
12              education; and

13              “(D) improving the health of Americans  
14              residing in rural areas.

15        “(c) USE OF FUNDS.—A rural-serving institution of  
16        higher education or consortium of such institutions that  
17        receives a grant under this section shall use grant funds  
18        for the establishment and expansion of physician assistant  
19        education programs in rural areas.

20        “(d) PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDUCATION PRO-  
21        GRAM.—In this section, the term ‘physician assistant edu-  
22        cation program’ has the meaning given to such term in  
23        section 799B of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.  
24        295p).

1 “(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There  
2 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section  
3 such sums as may be necessary for fiscal year 2020 and  
4 each of the five succeeding fiscal years.”.

5 **SEC. 7. IMPROVING PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDUCATION**  
6 **PROGRAMS.**

7 Title VIII of the Higher Education Act of 1965 is  
8 amended by inserting after section 898 (20 U.S.C.  
9 1161aa–1) the following:

10 **“PART BB—PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDUCATION**  
11 **ENHANCEMENT**

12 **“SEC. 899. DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM TO SUPPORT PHYSI-**  
13 **CIAN ASSISTANT FACULTY PREPARATION.**

14 “(a) GRANTS.—

15 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide  
16 grants to not more than 10 institutions of higher  
17 education to develop, expand, and support graduate-  
18 level programs to prepare certified physician assist-  
19 ants to become physician assistant faculty members  
20 in accredited graduate-level physician assistant edu-  
21 cation programs through collaboration between such  
22 a program and an institution of higher education  
23 that awards a graduate degree in education.

24 “(2) CAP.—No institution of higher education  
25 may receive more than an aggregate of \$600,000

1 under this section during fiscal years 2020, 2021,  
2 and 2022.

3 “(b) APPLICATION.—

4 “(1) IN GENERAL.—An institution of higher  
5 education desiring a grant under this section shall  
6 submit to the Secretary, at such time and in such  
7 manner as the Secretary may require, an application  
8 including—

9 “(A) a description of the intended collabo-  
10 ration to develop, expand, and support grad-  
11 uate-level programs to prepare certified physi-  
12 cian assistants to become physician assistant  
13 faculty members in accredited graduate-level  
14 physician assistant education programs; and

15 “(B) an estimate of the number of stu-  
16 dents who will be affected by such collaboration.

17 “(2) PRIORITY.—The Secretary shall give pri-  
18 ority to applications that demonstrate the potential  
19 to maximize quality instruction through the use of  
20 technology.

21 “(c) REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the  
22 date of the first grant under this section, the Secretary  
23 shall submit to Congress a report that—

24 “(1) describes the steps taken to implement this  
25 section; and

1 “(2) lists all recipients of grants under this sec-  
 2 tion as of the date of such submission.

3 “(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

4 “(1) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—  
 5 The term ‘institution of higher education’ has the  
 6 meaning given such term in section 101.

7 “(2) PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDUCATION PRO-  
 8 GRAM.—The term ‘physician assistant education  
 9 program’ has the meaning given such term in sec-  
 10 tion 799B of the Public Health Service Act (42  
 11 U.S.C. 295p).

12 “(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There  
 13 are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be  
 14 necessary to carry out this section for fiscal years 2020  
 15 through 2022.

16 **“SEC. 899A. GRANTS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND TECH-**  
 17 **NOLOGY IMPROVEMENTS IN PHYSICIAN AS-**  
 18 **SISTANT EDUCATION PROGRAMS.**

19 “(a) GRANTS.—

20 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary is authorized  
 21 to award grants, on a competitive basis, to not more  
 22 than 20 physician assistant education programs to  
 23 enhance physician assistant education programs and  
 24 improve patient safety by supporting the purchase of  
 25 new infrastructure and technology.

1           “(2) DURATION.—A grant awarded under this  
2           section shall be awarded for a period of not longer  
3           than five years.

4           “(b) APPLICATION.—

5           “(1) IN GENERAL.—A physician assistant edu-  
6           cation program may apply for a grant under this  
7           section by submitting an application to the Secretary  
8           at such time and in such manner as the Secretary  
9           may require that demonstrates how the grant funds  
10          will be used to improve physician assistant education  
11          programs and patient safety with respect to such  
12          programs.

13          “(2) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this  
14          section, the Secretary shall give priority to applica-  
15          tions that demonstrate the potential to—

16                 “(A) increase the number of physician as-  
17                 sistant graduates; and

18                 “(B) maximize accessibility to new and  
19                 emerging technologies, including human patient  
20                 simulators for physician assistant education  
21                 programs, through partnerships between the  
22                 grant recipient and other institutions of higher  
23                 education.

24          “(c) USE OF FUNDS.—A physician assistant edu-  
25          cation program that receives a grant awarded under this

1 section may use the grant for one or more of the following  
2 purposes:

3 “(1) Purchase, rental, or lease of scientific,  
4 medical or laboratory equipment, including human  
5 patient simulators and other new and emerging tech-  
6 nologies, for education purposes, including instruc-  
7 tional and research purposes.

8 “(2) Construction, maintenance and renovation,  
9 and improvement of classrooms, libraries, labora-  
10 tories, and other instructional facilities, including  
11 purchase or rental of telecommunications technology  
12 equipment or services.

13 “(3) Supporting faculty training in the use of  
14 new and emerging technologies, including human pa-  
15 tient simulators.

16 “(4) Other activities proposed in the application  
17 submitted pursuant to subsection (b) that—

18 “(A) contribute to carrying out the pur-  
19 poses of this section; and

20 “(B) are approved by the Secretary as part  
21 of the review and acceptance of such applica-  
22 tion.

23 “(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

24 “(1) PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDUCATION PRO-  
25 GRAM.—The term ‘physician assistant education

1       program’ has the meaning given such term in sec-  
2       tion 799B of the Public Health Service Act (42  
3       U.S.C. 295p).

4               “(2) HUMAN PATIENT SIMULATOR.—The term  
5       ‘human patient simulator’ means a computerized de-  
6       vice that is anatomically precise and responds phys-  
7       iologically to interventions.

8               “(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There  
9       are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section  
10      such sums as may be necessary for fiscal year 2020 and  
11      each of the five succeeding fiscal years.”.

○