

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2695

To provide for research to better understand the causes and consequences of sexual harassment affecting individuals in the scientific, technical, engineering, and mathematics workforce and to examine policies to reduce the prevalence and negative impact of such harassment, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 20, 2021

Ms. JOHNSON of Texas (for herself and Mr. LUCAS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

A BILL

To provide for research to better understand the causes and consequences of sexual harassment affecting individuals in the scientific, technical, engineering, and mathematics workforce and to examine policies to reduce the prevalence and negative impact of such harassment, 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; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

4 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
5 “Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act”.

1 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for
 2 this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
 Sec. 2. Findings.
 Sec. 3. Definitions.
 Sec. 4. Research grants.
 Sec. 5. Data collection.
 Sec. 6. Responsible conduct guide.
 Sec. 7. Interagency working group.
 Sec. 8. National academies assessment.
 Sec. 9. Authorization of appropriations.

3 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress makes the following findings:

5 (1) According to the report issued by the Na-
 6 tional Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Med-
 7 icine in 2018 entitled “Sexual Harassment of
 8 Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Aca-
 9 demic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine”—

10 (A) sexual harassment is pervasive in insti-
 11 tutions of higher education;

12 (B) the most common type of sexual har-
 13 assment is gender harassment, which includes
 14 verbal and nonverbal behaviors that convey in-
 15 sulting, hostile, and degrading attitudes about
 16 members of one gender;

17 (C) 58 percent of individuals in the aca-
 18 demic workplace experience sexual harassment,
 19 the second highest rate when compared to the
 20 military, the private sector, and Federal, State,
 21 and local government;

1 (D) women who are members of racial or
2 ethnic minority groups are more likely to expe-
3 rience sexual harassment and to feel unsafe at
4 work than White women, White men, or men
5 who are members of such groups;

6 (E) the training for each individual who
7 has a doctor of philosophy in the science, tech-
8 nology, engineering, and mathematics fields is
9 estimated to cost approximately \$500,000; and

10 (F) attrition of an individual so trained re-
11 sults in a loss of talent and money.

12 (2) Sexual harassment undermines career ad-
13 vancement for women.

14 (3) According to a 2017 University of Illinois
15 study, among astronomers and planetary scientists,
16 18 percent of women who are members of racial or
17 ethnic minority groups and 12 percent of White
18 women skipped professional events because they did
19 not feel safe attending.

20 (4) Many women report leaving employment at
21 institutions of higher education due to sexual har-
22 assment.

23 (5) Research shows the majority of individuals
24 do not formally report experiences of sexual harass-

1 ment due to a justified fear of retaliation or other
2 negative professional or personal consequences.

3 (6) Reporting procedures with respect to such
4 harassment are inconsistent among Federal science
5 agencies and have varying degrees of accessibility.

6 (7) There is not adequate communication
7 among Federal science agencies and between such
8 agencies and grantees regarding reports of sexual
9 harassment, which has resulted in harassers receiv-
10 ing Federal funding after moving to a different in-
11 stitution.

12 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

13 In this Act:

14 (1) **ACADEMIES.**—The term “Academies”
15 means the National Academies of Sciences, Engi-
16 neering, and Medicine.

17 (2) **DIRECTOR.**—The term “Director” means
18 the Director of the National Science Foundation.

19 (3) **FEDERAL SCIENCE AGENCY.**—The term
20 “Federal science agency” means any Federal agency
21 with an annual extramural research expenditure of
22 over \$100,000,000.

23 (4) **FINDING OR DETERMINATION.**—The term
24 “finding or determination” means the final disposi-
25 tion of a matter involving a violation of organiza-

1 tional policies and processes, to include the exhaus-
2 tion of permissible appeals, or a conviction of a sex-
3 ual offense in a criminal court of law.

4 (5) GENDER HARASSMENT.—The term “gender
5 harassment” means verbal and nonverbal behaviors
6 that convey hostility, objectification, exclusion, or
7 second-class status about one’s gender, gender iden-
8 tity, gender presentation, sexual orientation, or preg-
9 nancy status.

10 (6) GRANTEE.—The term “grantee” means the
11 legal entity to which a grant is awarded and that is
12 accountable to the Federal Government for the use
13 of the funds provided.

14 (7) GRANT PERSONNEL.—The term “grant per-
15 sonnel” means principal investigators, co-principal
16 investigators, postdoctoral researchers and other em-
17 ployees supported by a grant award, cooperative
18 agreement, or contract under Federal law.

19 (8) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The
20 term “institution of higher education” has the
21 meaning given such term in section 101 of the High-
22 er Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

23 (9) SEXUAL HARASSMENT.—The term “sexual
24 harassment” means conduct that encompasses—

25 (A) unwelcome sexual advances;

1 (B) unwanted physical contact that is sex-
2 ual in nature, including assault;

3 (C) unwanted sexual attention, including
4 sexual comments and propositions for sexual ac-
5 tivity;

6 (D) conditioning professional or edu-
7 cational benefits on sexual activity; and

8 (E) retaliation for rejecting unwanted sex-
9 ual attention.

10 (10) STEM.—The term “STEM” means
11 science, technology, engineering, and mathematics,
12 including computer science.

13 **SEC. 4. RESEARCH GRANTS.**

14 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Director shall establish a pro-
15 gram to award grants, on a competitive basis, to institu-
16 tions of higher education or nonprofit organizations (or
17 consortia of such institutions or organizations)—

18 (1) to expand research efforts to better under-
19 stand the factors contributing to, and consequences
20 of, sexual harassment and gender harassment affect-
21 ing individuals in the STEM workforce, including
22 students and trainees; and

23 (2) to examine interventions to reduce the inci-
24 dence and negative consequences of such harass-
25 ment.

1 (b) USE OF FUNDS.—Activities funded by a grant
2 under this section may include—

3 (1) research on the sexual harassment and gen-
4 der harassment experiences of individuals in under-
5 represented or vulnerable groups, including racial
6 and ethnic minority groups, disabled individuals, for-
7 eign nationals, sexual- and gender-minority individ-
8 uals, and others;

9 (2) development and assessment of policies,
10 procedures, trainings, and interventions, with respect
11 to sexual harassment and gender harassment, con-
12 flict management, and ways to foster respectful and
13 inclusive climates;

14 (3) research on approaches for remediating the
15 negative impacts and outcomes of such harassment
16 on individuals experiencing such harassment;

17 (4) support for institutions of higher education
18 to develop, adapt, and assess the impact of innova-
19 tive, evidence-based strategies, policies, and ap-
20 proaches to policy implementation to prevent and
21 address sexual harassment and gender harassment;

22 (5) research on alternatives to the hierarchical
23 and dependent relationships, including but not lim-
24 ited to the mentor-mentee relationship, in academia

1 that have been shown to create higher levels of risk
2 for sexual harassment and gender harassment; and
3 (6) establishing a center for the ongoing com-
4 pilation, management, and analysis of campus cli-
5 mate survey data.

6 **SEC. 5. DATA COLLECTION.**

7 Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment
8 of this Act, the Director shall convene a working group
9 composed of representatives of Federal statistical agen-
10 cies—

11 (1) to develop questions on sexual harassment
12 and gender harassment in STEM departments to
13 gather national data on the prevalence, nature, and
14 implications of sexual harassment and gender har-
15 assment in institutions of higher education; and

16 (2) to include such questions as appropriate,
17 with sufficient protections of the privacy of respond-
18 ents, in relevant surveys conducted by the National
19 Center for Science and Engineering Statistics and
20 other relevant entities.

21 **SEC. 6. RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT GUIDE.**

22 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the
23 date of enactment of this Act, the Director shall enter into
24 an agreement with the Academies to update the report en-
25 titled “On Being a Scientist: A Guide to Responsible Con-

duct in Research” issued by the Academies. The report,
as so updated, shall include—

(1) updated professional standards of conduct
in research;

(2) standards of treatment individuals can expect to receive under such updated standards of conduct;

(3) evidence-based practices for fostering a climate intolerant of sexual harassment and gender harassment;

(4) methods, including bystander intervention, for identifying and addressing incidents of sexual harassment and gender harassment; and

(5) professional standards for mentorship and teaching with an emphasis on preventing sexual harassment and gender harassment.

(b) RECOMMENDATIONS.—In updating the report under subsection (a), the Academies shall take into account recommendations made in the report issued by the Academies in 2018 entitled “Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine” and other relevant studies and evidence.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the effective date of the contract under subsection (a), the Acad-

1 emies, as part of such agreement, shall submit to the Di-
2 rector and the Committee on Science, Space, and Tech-
3 nology of the House of Representatives and the Committee
4 on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate
5 the report referred to in such subsection, as updated pur-
6 suant to such subsection.

7 **SEC. 7. INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the Office of
9 Science and Technology Policy, acting through the Na-
10 tional Science and Technology Council, shall establish an
11 interagency working group for the purpose of coordinating
12 Federal science agency efforts to reduce the prevalence of
13 sexual harassment and gender harassment involving grant
14 personnel. The working group shall be chaired by the Di-
15 rector of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (or
16 the Director’s designee) and shall include a representative
17 from each Federal science agency with annual extramural
18 research expenditures totaling over \$1,000,000,000, a rep-
19 resentative from the Department of Education, and a rep-
20 resentative from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity
21 Commission.

22 (b) RESPONSIBILITIES OF WORKING GROUP.—The
23 interagency working group established under subsection
24 (a) shall coordinate Federal science agency efforts to im-

1 plement the policy guidelines developed under subsection
2 (c)(2).

3 (c) RESPONSIBILITIES OF OSTP.—The Director of
4 the Office of Science and Technology Policy shall—

5 (1) not later than 90 days after the date of the
6 enactment of this Act, submit to the Committee on
7 Science, Space, and Technology of the House of
8 Representatives and the Committee on Commerce,
9 Science, and Transportation of the Senate an inven-
10 tory of policies, procedures, and resources dedicated
11 to preventing and responding to reports of sexual
12 harassment and gender harassment at Federal agen-
13 cies that provide legal definitions to which institu-
14 tions of higher education must comply; and

15 (2) not later than 6 months after the date on
16 which the inventory is submitted under paragraph
17 (1)—

18 (A) in consultation with outside stake-
19 holders and Federal science agencies, develop a
20 uniform set of policy guidelines for Federal
21 science agencies; and

22 (B) submit a report to the committees re-
23 ferred to in paragraph (1) containing such
24 guidelines;

1 (3) encourage and monitor efforts of Federal
2 science agencies to develop or maintain and imple-
3 ment policies based on the guidelines developed
4 under paragraph (2), including the extent to which
5 Federal science agency policies depart from the uni-
6 form policy guidelines;

7 (4) not later than 1 year after the date on
8 which the inventory under paragraph (1) is sub-
9 mitted, and every 5 years thereafter, the Director of
10 the Office of Science and Technology Policy shall re-
11 port to Congress on the implementation by Federal
12 science agencies of the policy guidelines developed
13 under paragraph (2); and

14 (5) update such policy guidelines as needed.

15 (d) REQUIREMENTS.—In developing policy guidelines
16 under subsection (c)(2), the Director of the Office of
17 Science and Technology Policy shall include guidelines
18 that require—

19 (1) grantees to submit to the Federal science
20 agency or agencies from which the grantees receive
21 funding reports relating to—

22 (A) administrative action, related to an al-
23 legation against grant personnel of any sexual
24 harassment or gender harassment, as set forth
25 in organizational policies or codes of conduct,

1 statutes, regulations, or executive orders, that
2 affects the ability of grant personnel or their
3 trainees to carry out the activities of the grant;
4 and

5 (B) findings or determinations against
6 grant personnel of sexual harassment or gender
7 harassment, as set forth in organizational poli-
8 cies or codes of conduct, statutes, regulations,
9 or executive orders, including any findings or
10 determinations related to reports submitted
11 under subparagraph (A) and any disciplinary
12 action that was taken;

13 (2) the sharing, updating, and archiving of re-
14 ports of sexual harassment and gender harassment
15 from grantees submitted under paragraph (1)(B)
16 with relevant Federal science agencies on a quarterly
17 basis; and

18 (3) to the extent practicable, ensure consistency
19 among Federal agencies with regards to the policies
20 and procedures for receiving reports submitted pur-
21 suant to paragraph (1), which may include the des-
22 ignation of a single agency to field reports so sub-
23 mitted.

24 (e) CONSIDERATIONS.—In developing policy guide-
25 lines under subsection (c)(2), the Director of the Office

1 of Science and Technology Policy shall consider guidelines
2 that require or incentivize—

3 (1) grantees to periodically assess their organi-
4 zational climate, which may include the use of cli-
5 mate surveys, focus groups, or exit interviews;

6 (2) grantees to publish on a publicly available
7 internet website the results of assessments con-
8 ducted pursuant to paragraph (1), disaggregated by
9 gender and, if possible, race, ethnicity, disability sta-
10 tus, and sexual orientation;

11 (3) grantees to make public on an annual basis
12 the number of reports of sexual harassment and
13 gender harassment at each such institution;

14 (4) grantees to regularly assess and improve
15 policies, procedures, and interventions to reduce the
16 prevalence of sexual harassment and gender harass-
17 ment;

18 (5) each grantee to demonstrate in its proposal
19 for a grant award, cooperative agreement, or con-
20 tract that a code of conduct is in place for maintain-
21 ing a healthy and welcoming workplace for grant
22 personnel and their trainees;

23 (6) the diffusion of the hierarchical and depend-
24 ent relationships between grant personnel and their
25 trainees;

1 (7) each grantee and Federal science agency to
2 have in place mechanisms for the re-integration of
3 individuals who have experienced sexual harassment
4 and gender harassment; and

5 (8) grantees to work to create a climate intoler-
6 ant of sexual harassment and gender harassment.

7 (f) FEDERAL SCIENCE AGENCY IMPLEMENTATION.—
8 Each Federal science agency shall—

9 (1) develop or maintain and implement policies
10 with respect to sexual harassment and gender har-
11 assment that are consistent with policy guidelines
12 under subsection (c)(2) and that protect the privacy
13 of all parties involved in any report and investigation
14 of sexual harassment and gender harassment, except
15 to the extent necessary to carry out an investigation;
16 and

17 (2) broadly disseminate such policies to current
18 and potential recipients of research grants, coopera-
19 tive agreements, or contracts awarded by such agen-
20 cy.

21 (g) FERPA.—The Director of the Office of Science
22 and Technology Policy shall ensure that such guidelines
23 and requirements are consistent with the requirements of
24 section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20

1 U.S.C. 1232g) (commonly referred to as the “Family Edu-
2 cational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974”).

3 (h) SUNSET.—The interagency working group estab-
4 lished under subsection (a) shall terminate on the date
5 that is 7 years after the date of the enactment of this
6 Act.

7 **SEC. 8. NATIONAL ACADEMIES ASSESSMENT.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 3 years after the
9 date of enactment of this Act, the Director shall enter into
10 an agreement with the Academies to undertake a study
11 of the influence of sexual harassment and gender harass-
12 ment in institutions of higher education on the career ad-
13 vancement of individuals in the STEM workforce. The
14 study shall assess—

15 (1) the state of research on sexual harassment
16 and gender harassment in such workforce;

17 (2) whether research demonstrates a change in
18 the prevalence of sexual harassment and gender har-
19 assment in such workforce;

20 (3) the progress made with respect to imple-
21 menting recommendations promulgated in the Acad-
22 emies consensus study report entitled “Sexual Har-
23 assment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Con-
24 sequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and
25 Medicine”; and

1 (4) where to focus future efforts with respect to
2 decreasing sexual harassment and gender harass-
3 ment in such institutions.

4 **SEC. 9. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

5 There is authorized to be appropriated to the Direc-
6 tor to carry out this Act, \$17,500,000.

○