

113TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 4234

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to reduce the shortage of psychiatrists in the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs by offering competitive employment incentives to certain psychiatrists, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 13, 2014

Mr. BUCSHON (for himself and Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to reduce the shortage of psychiatrists in the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs by offering competitive employment incentives to certain psychiatrists, 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 “Ensuring Veterans’
5 Resiliency Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM FOR REPAYMENT OF EDU-**
2 **CATIONAL LOANS FOR CERTAIN PSYCHIA-**
3 **TRISTS OF VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRA-**
4 **TION.**

5 (a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—The Secretary of Veterans
6 Affairs shall carry out a pilot program to repay a loan
7 of an individual described in subsection (b) that—

8 (1) was used by the individual to finance edu-
9 cation regarding psychiatric medicine, including edu-
10 cation leading to an undergraduate degree and edu-
11 cation leading to the degree of doctor of medicine or
12 of doctor of osteopathy; and

13 (2) was obtained from a governmental entity,
14 private financial institution, school, or other author-
15 ized entity, as determined by the Secretary.

16 (b) **ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS.**—To be eligible to obtain
17 a loan repayment under this section, an individual shall—

18 (1) either—

19 (A) be licensed or eligible for licensure to
20 practice psychiatric medicine in the Veterans
21 Health Administration of the Department of
22 Veterans Affairs; or

23 (B) be enrolled in the final year of a resi-
24 dency program leading to a specialty qualifica-
25 tion in psychiatric medicine that is approved by

1 the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical
2 Education; and

3 (2) as determined appropriate by the Secretary,
4 demonstrate a commitment to a long-term career as
5 a psychiatrist in the Veterans Health Administra-
6 tion, including by requiring a set number of years of
7 obligated service.

8 (c) SELECTION.—The Secretary shall select not less
9 than 10 individuals described in subsection (b) to partici-
10 pate in the pilot program for each year in which the Sec-
11 retary carries out the pilot program.

12 (d) LOAN REPAYMENTS.—

13 (1) AMOUNTS.—Subject to the limits estab-
14 lished by paragraph (2), a loan repayment under
15 this section may consist of payment of the principal,
16 interest, and related expenses of a loan obtained by
17 an individual described in subsection (b) for all edu-
18 cational expenses (including tuition, fees, books, and
19 laboratory expenses) relating to a degree described
20 in subsection (a)(1).

21 (2) LIMIT.—For each year of obligated service
22 that an individual agrees to serve in an agreement
23 described in subsection (b)(2), the Secretary may
24 pay not more than \$60,000 on behalf of the indi-
25 vidual.

1 (e) BREACH.—

2 (1) LIABILITY.—An individual who participates
3 in the pilot program under subsection (a) who fails
4 to satisfy the commitment described in subsection
5 (b)(2) shall be liable to the United States, in lieu of
6 any service obligation arising from such participa-
7 tion, for the amount which has been paid or is pay-
8 able to or on behalf of the individual under the pro-
9 gram, reduced by the proportion that the number of
10 days served for completion of the service obligation
11 bears to the total number of days in the period of
12 obligated service of the individual.

13 (2) REPAYMENT PERIOD.—Any amount of dam-
14 ages which the United States is entitled to recover
15 under this subsection shall be paid to the United
16 States within the one-year period beginning on the
17 date of the breach of the agreement.

18 (f) PROHIBITION ON SIMULTANEOUS ELIGIBILITY.—
19 An individual who is participating in any other program
20 of the Federal Government that repays the educational
21 loans of the individual may not participate in the pilot pro-
22 gram under subsection (a).

23 (g) REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the date
24 on which the pilot program terminates under subsection
25 (g), the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Vet-

1 erans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the
2 Senate a report on the pilot program. The report shall
3 include the overall effect of the pilot program on the psy-
4 chiatric workforce shortage of the Veterans Health Ad-
5 ministration, the long-term stability of such workforce,
6 and overall workforce strategies of the Veterans Health
7 Administration that seek to promote the physical and
8 mental resiliency of all veterans.

9 (h) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary shall prescribe
10 regulations to carry out this section, including standards
11 for qualified loans and authorized payees and other terms
12 and conditions for the making of loan repayments.

13 (i) TERMINATION.—The authority to carry out the
14 pilot program shall expire on the date that is three years
15 after the date on which the Secretary commences the pilot
16 program.

17 **SEC. 3. COMPTROLLER GENERAL STUDY ON PAY DISPARI-**
18 **TIES OF PSYCHIATRISTS OF VETERANS**
19 **HEALTH ADMINISTRATION.**

20 (a) STUDY.—Not later than one year after the date
21 of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of
22 the United States shall conduct a study of pay disparities
23 among psychiatrists of the Veterans Health Administra-
24 tion of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The study
25 shall include—

1 (1) an examination of laws, regulations, prac-
2 tices, and policies, including salary flexibilities, that
3 contribute to such disparities; and

4 (2) recommendations with respect to legislative
5 or regulatory actions to improve equity in pay
6 among such psychiatrists.

7 (b) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date
8 on which the Comptroller General completes the study
9 under subsection (a), the Comptroller General shall sub-
10 mit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House
11 of Representatives and the Senate a report containing the
12 results of the study.

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