

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1909

To prioritize educating and training for existing and new environmental health professionals.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 5, 2017

Mrs. LAWRENCE (for herself, Mr. CONYERS, Ms. NORTON, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. EVANS, and Mr. COHEN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To prioritize educating and training for existing and new environmental health professionals.

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 “Environmental Health
5 Workforce Act of 2017”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds as follows:

1 (1) The environmental health workforce is vital
2 to protecting the health and safety of the public.

3 (2) For years, State and local governmental
4 public health agencies have reported substantial
5 workforce losses and other challenges to the environ-
6 mental health workforce.

7 (3) According to the Association of State and
8 Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and the Na-
9 tional Association of County and City Health Offi-
10 cials (NACCHO), more than 50,600 State and local
11 environmental health workforce jobs have been lost
12 since 2008. This represents approximately 22 per-
13 cent of the total State and local environmental
14 health workforce.

15 (4) In the coming years, the retiring Baby
16 Boomer Generation will lead to a further decrease in
17 the environmental health workforce.

18 (5) Currently, only 28 States require a creden-
19 tial for environmental health workers that is an im-
20 partial, third-party endorsement of an individual's
21 professional knowledge and experience.

22 (6) Educating and training existing and new
23 environmental health professionals should be a na-
24 tional public health goal.

1 **SEC. 3. MODEL STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR**
2 **CREDENTIALING ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**
3 **WORKERS.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the
5 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and
6 Human Services, in coordination with appropriate na-
7 tional professional organizations, Federal, State, local,
8 and tribal governmental agencies, and private-sector and
9 nongovernmental entities, shall develop model standards
10 and guidelines for credentialing environmental health
11 workers.

12 (b) PROVISION OF STANDARDS AND TECHNICAL AS-
13 SISTANCE.—The Secretary of Health and Human Services
14 shall provide to State, local, and tribal governments—

15 (1) the model standards and guidelines devel-
16 oped under subsection (a); and

17 (2) technical assistance in credentialing envi-
18 ronmental health workers.

19 **SEC. 4. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOP-**
20 **MENT PLAN.**

21 (a) IN GENERAL.—To ensure that programs and ac-
22 tivities (including education, training, and payment pro-
23 grams) of the Department of Health and Human Services
24 for developing the environmental health workforce meet
25 national needs, the Secretary of Health and Human Serv-

1 ices shall develop a comprehensive and coordinated plan
2 for such programs and activities that—

3 (1) includes performance measures to more
4 clearly determine the extent to which these programs
5 and activities are meeting the Department’s stra-
6 tegic goal of strengthening the environmental health
7 workforce;

8 (2) identifies and communicates to stakeholders
9 any gaps between existing programs and activities
10 and future environmental health workforce needs
11 identified in workforce projections of the Health Re-
12 sources and Services Administration;

13 (3) identifies actions needed to address such
14 identified gaps; and

15 (4) identifies any additional statutory authority
16 that is needed by the Department to implement such
17 identified actions.

18 (b) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 2
19 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Sec-
20 retary of Health and Human Services shall submit to the
21 Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of
22 the Senate, and to the Committees on Energy and Com-
23 merce and Education and the Workforce of the House of
24 Representatives, the plan developed under subsection (a).

1 **SEC. 5. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOP-**
2 **MENT REPORT.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 2 years after the
4 date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General
5 of the United States shall examine and identify best prac-
6 tices in 6 States (as described in subsection (b)) related
7 to training and credentialing requirements for environ-
8 mental health workers and submit to the Committee on
9 Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and
10 the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House
11 of Representatives a report that includes information con-
12 cerning—

13 (1) types of environmental health workers em-
14 ployed at State, local, and city health departments
15 and independent environmental health agencies;

16 (2) educational backgrounds of environmental
17 health workers;

18 (3) whether environmental health workers are
19 credentialed or registered, and what type of creden-
20 tial or registration each worker has received;

21 (4) State requirements for continuing education
22 for environmental health workers;

23 (5) whether State, local, and city health depart-
24 ments and independent environmental health agen-
25 cies track continuing education units for their envi-
26 ronmental health workers; and

1 (6) how frequently any exam required to qualify
2 environmental health workers is updated and re-
3 viewed to ensure that the exam is consistent with
4 current law.

5 (b) SELECTION OF STATES.—The report described in
6 subsection (a) shall be based upon the examination of such
7 best practices with respect to 3 States that have
8 credentialing requirements for environmental health work-
9 ers (such as Maryland, Ohio, and Washington) and 3
10 States that do not have such requirements (such as Indi-
11 ana, Michigan, and Pennsylvania).

12 **SEC. 6. PUBLIC SERVICE LOAN FORGIVENESS.**

13 Section 455(m) of the Higher Education Act of 1965
14 (20 U.S.C. 1087e(m)) is amended in paragraph (3)(B)—

15 (1) in clause (i), by striking “or” at the end;

16 (2) in clause (ii), by striking the period at the
17 end and inserting “; or”; and

18 (3) by adding at the end the following:

19 “(iii) a full-time job as an environ-
20 mental health worker (as defined in section
21 7 of the Environmental Health Workforce
22 Act of 2017) who is accredited, certified,
23 or licensed in accordance with applicable
24 law.”.

1 **SEC. 7. DEFINITION.**

2 In this Act, the terms “environmental health worker”
3 and “environmental health workforce” refer to public
4 health workers who investigate and assess hazardous envi-
5 ronmental agents in various environmental settings and
6 develop, promote, and enforce guidelines, policies, and
7 interventions to control such hazards.

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