

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1271

AN ACT

To establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs a pilot program instituting a clinical observation program for pre-med students preparing to attend medical school.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Veterans-Specific Edu-
3 cation for Tomorrow’s Health Professionals Act” or the
4 “Vet HP Act”.

5 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING DEPARTMENT OF**
6 **VETERANS AFFAIRS PILOT PROGRAM FOR**
7 **CLINICAL OBSERVATION BY UNDER-**
8 **GRADUATE STUDENTS.**

9 It is the sense of Congress that the pilot program
10 described in section 3(a) should be designed to—

- 11 (1) increase the awareness, knowledge, and em-
12 pathy of future health professionals toward the
13 health conditions common to veterans;
14 (2) increase the diversity of the recruitment
15 pool of future physicians of the Department; and
16 (3) expand clinical observation opportunities for
17 all students by encouraging students of all back-
18 grounds to consider a career in the health profes-
19 sions.

20 **SEC. 3. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS PILOT PRO-**
21 **GRAM FOR CLINICAL OBSERVATION BY UN-**
22 **DERGRADUATE STUDENTS.**

23 (a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—The Secretary of Veterans
24 Affairs shall carry out a pilot program for a one-year pe-
25 riod, beginning not later than August 15, 2021, to provide
26 certain students described in subsection (d) a clinical ob-

1 servation experience at medical centers of the Department
2 of Veterans Affairs.

3 (b) MEDICAL CENTER SELECTION.—The Secretary
4 shall carry out the pilot program under this section at not
5 fewer than five medical centers of the Department. In se-
6 lecting such medical centers, the Secretary shall ensure
7 regional diversity among such selected medical centers.

8 (c) CLINICAL OBSERVATION SESSIONS.—

9 (1) FREQUENCY AND DURATION.—In carrying
10 out the pilot program, the Secretary shall—

11 (A) provide at least one and not more than
12 three clinical observation sessions at each med-
13 ical center selected during each calendar year;

14 (B) ensure that each clinical observation
15 session—

16 (i) lasts between four and six months;
17 and

18 (ii) to the extent practicable, begins
19 and ends concurrently with one or more
20 academic terms of an institution of higher
21 education (as defined in section 101 of the
22 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
23 1001)); and

1 (C) ensure that the clinical observation
2 sessions provided at a medical center have mini-
3 mal overlap.

4 (2) SESSIONS.—The Secretary shall ensure that
5 the pilot program consists of clinical observation ses-
6 sions as follows:

7 (A) Each session shall allow for not fewer
8 than five students nor greater than 15 students
9 to participate in the session.

10 (B) Each session shall consist of not fewer
11 than 20 observational hours nor greater than
12 40 observational hours.

13 (C) A majority of the observational hours
14 shall be spent observing a health professional.
15 The other observational hours shall be spent in
16 a manner that ensures a robust, well rounded
17 experience that exposes the students to a vari-
18 ety of aspects of medical care and health care
19 administration.

20 (D) Each session shall provide a diverse
21 clinical observation experience.

22 (d) STUDENTS.—

23 (1) SELECTION.—The Secretary shall select to
24 participate in the pilot program under subsection (a)
25 students who are—

1 (A) nationals of the United States;

2 (B) enrolled in an accredited program of
3 study at an institution of higher education; and

4 (C) referred by their institution of higher
5 education following an internal application proc-
6 ess.

7 (2) PRIORITY.—In making such selection, the
8 Secretary shall give priority to each of the following
9 five categories of students:

10 (A) Students who, at the time of the com-
11 pletion of their secondary education, resided in
12 a health professional shortage area (as defined
13 in section 332 of the Public Health Service Act
14 (42 U.S.C. 254e)).

15 (B) First generation college students (as
16 defined in section 402A(h)(3) of the Higher
17 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1067q(a))).

18 (C) Students who have been referred by
19 minority-serving institutions (as defined in sec-
20 tion 371(a) of the Higher Education Act of
21 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1067q(a))).

22 (D) Veterans (as defined in section 101 of
23 title 38, United States Code).

24 (E) Students who indicate an intention to
25 specialize in a health professional occupation

1 identified by the Inspector General of the De-
2 partment under section 7412 of title 38, United
3 States Code, as having a staffing shortage.

4 (3) ASSIGNMENT TO MEDICAL CENTERS.—The
5 Secretary shall assign students selected under para-
6 graph (1) to medical centers selected under sub-
7 section (b) without regard for whether such medical
8 centers have staffing shortages in any health profes-
9 sional occupation pursuant to section 7412 of title
10 38, United States Code.

11 (e) OTHER MATTERS.—In carrying out the pilot pro-
12 gram under this section, the Secretary shall—

13 (1) establish a formal status to facilitate the ac-
14 cess to medical centers of the Department by stu-
15 dent observers participating in the pilot program;

16 (2) establish standardized legal, privacy, and
17 ethical requirements for the student observers, in-
18 cluding with respect to—

19 (A) ensuring that no student observer pro-
20 vides any care to patients while participating as
21 an observer; and

22 (B) ensuring the suitability of a student to
23 participate in the pilot program to ensure that
24 the student poses no risk to patients;

1 (3) develop and implement a partnership strat-
2 egy with minority-serving institutions to encourage
3 referrals;

4 (4) create standardized procedures for student
5 observers;

6 (5) create an online information page about the
7 pilot program on the internet website of the Depart-
8 ment;

9 (6) publish on the online information page cre-
10 ated under paragraph (5) the locations of such cen-
11 ters, and other information on the pilot program,
12 not later than 180 days before the date on which ap-
13 plications are required to be submitted by potential
14 student observers;

15 (7) identify medical centers and specific health
16 professionals participating in the pilot program; and

17 (8) notify the Committees on Veterans' Affairs
18 of the House of Representatives and the Senate of
19 the medical centers selected under subsection (c)
20 within 30 days of selection, to facilitate program
21 awareness.

22 (f) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the com-
23 pletion of the pilot program under subsection (a), the Sec-
24 retary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs

1 of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report
2 on the results of the pilot program, including—

3 (1) the number and demographics of all appli-
4 cants, those accepted to participate in the pilot pro-
5 gram, and those who completed the pilot program;
6 and

7 (2) if participating institutions of higher edu-
8 cation choose to administer satisfaction surveys that
9 assess the experience of those who completed the
10 pilot program, the results of any such satisfaction
11 surveys, provided at the discretion of the institution
12 of higher education.

13 **SEC. 4. NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.**

14 No additional funds are authorized to be appro-
15 priated to carry out the requirements of this Act. Such
16 requirements shall be carried out using amounts otherwise
17 authorized to be appropriated.

Passed the House of Representatives March 5,
2019.

Attest:

Clerk.

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