

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2569

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.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 26, 2019

Ms. BALDWIN (for herself and Mr. TILLIS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

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,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

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

1 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING DEPARTMENT OF**
2 **VETERANS AFFAIRS PILOT PROGRAM FOR**
3 **CLINICAL OBSERVATION BY UNDER-**
4 **GRADUATE STUDENTS.**

5 It is the sense of Congress that the pilot program
6 under section 3(a) should be designed to—

7 (1) increase the awareness, knowledge, and em-
8 pathy of future health professionals toward the
9 health conditions common to veterans;

10 (2) increase the diversity of the recruitment
11 pool of future physicians of the Department of Vet-
12 erans Affairs; and

13 (3) expand clinical observation opportunities for
14 all students by encouraging students of all back-
15 grounds to consider a career in the health profes-
16 sions.

17 **SEC. 3. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS PILOT PRO-**
18 **GRAM FOR CLINICAL OBSERVATION BY UN-**
19 **DERGRADUATE STUDENTS.**

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

26 (b) **MEDICAL CENTER SELECTION.**—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry
2 out the pilot program under subsection (a) at not
3 fewer than five medical centers of the Department.

4 (2) REGIONAL DIVERSITY.—In selecting med-
5 ical centers under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall
6 ensure regional diversity among such selected med-
7 ical centers.

8 (c) CLINICAL OBSERVATION SESSIONS.—

9 (1) FREQUENCY AND DURATION.—In carrying
10 out the pilot program under subsection (a), the Sec-
11 retary shall—

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

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

17 (i) lasts between four and six months;

18 and

19 (ii) to the extent practicable, begins
20 and ends concurrently with one or more
21 academic terms of an institution of higher
22 education; and

23 (C) ensure that the clinical observation
24 sessions provided at a medical center have mini-
25 mal overlap.

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

4 (A) Each session shall allow for not fewer
5 than five students nor greater than 15 students
6 to participate in the session.

7 (B) Each session shall consist of not fewer
8 than 20 observational hours nor greater than
9 40 observational hours.

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

17 (D) Each session shall provide a diverse
18 clinical observation experience.

19 (d) STUDENTS.—

20 (1) SELECTION.—The Secretary shall select to
21 participate in the pilot program under subsection (a)
22 students who are—

23 (A) nationals of the United States (as de-
24 fined in section 101 of the Immigration and
25 Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101));

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

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

6 (2) PRIORITY.—In selecting participants under
7 paragraph (1), the Secretary shall give priority to
8 each of the following five categories of students:

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

14 (B) First generation college students (as
15 defined in section 402A(h) of the Higher Edu-
16 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070a–11(h)).

17 (C) Students who have been referred by
18 minority-serving institutions.

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

21 (E) Students who indicate an intention to
22 specialize in a health professional occupation
23 identified by the Inspector General of the De-
24 partment of Veterans Affairs under section

1 7412 of title 38, United States Code, as having
2 a staffing shortage.

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

10 (e) OTHER MATTERS.—In carrying out the pilot pro-
11 gram under subsection (a), the Secretary shall—

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

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

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

21 (B) ensuring the suitability of a student to
22 participate in the pilot program to ensure that
23 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 an 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 med-
11 ical centers and other information on the pilot pro-
12 gram not later than 180 days before the date on
13 which applications are required to be submitted by
14 potential student observers;

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

17 (8) notify the Committee on Veterans' Affairs
18 of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Af-
19 fairs of the House of Representatives of the medical
20 centers selected under subsection (c) within 30 days
21 of selection to facilitate program 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 Committee on Veterans' Affairs
25 of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of

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

3 (1) the number and demographics of—

4 (A) all applicants to the pilot program;

5 (B) those accepted to participate in the
6 pilot program; and

7 (C) those who completed the pilot pro-
8 gram; and

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

15 (g) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

16 (1) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The
17 term “institution of higher education” has the
18 meaning given that term in section 101 of the High-
19 er Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

20 (2) MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTION.—The
21 term “minority-serving institution” means an insti-
22 tution described in section 371(a) of the Higher
23 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1067q(a)).

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

2 No additional funds are authorized to be appro-
3 priated to carry out the requirements of this Act. Such
4 requirements shall be carried out using amounts otherwise
5 authorized to be appropriated.

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