

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2880

To authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to award grants to States to provide safety measures to social workers, health workers, and human services professionals performing services placing such individuals in high-risk and potentially dangerous situations, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 18, 2019

Ms. SINEMA (for herself and Ms. MURKOWSKI) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to award grants to States to provide safety measures to social workers, health workers, and human services professionals performing services placing such individuals in high-risk and potentially dangerous situations, 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Protecting Social
3 Workers and Health Professionals from Workplace Vio-
4 lence Act of 2019”.

5 **SEC. 2. WORKPLACE SAFETY GRANT PROGRAM.**

6 (a) GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall award
8 grants to States, Indian Tribes, Tribal organiza-
9 tions, and urban Indian organizations to provide
10 safety measures to social workers, health workers,
11 and human services professionals (as designated by
12 the Secretary), performing services placing such in-
13 dividuals in high-risk and potentially dangerous situ-
14 ations.

15 (2) CONSULTATION.—In awarding grants under
16 this subsection, the Secretary may consult with the
17 Secretary of Labor and the heads of other relevant
18 Federal agencies.

19 (b) USE OF FUNDS.—A grant awarded under sub-
20 section (a) may be used to provide or support the following
21 safety measures:

22 (1)(A) The procurement and installation of
23 safety equipment, including communications or re-
24 cording systems, such as cell phones, wearable track-
25 ing devices with GPS/Bluetooth locator, or panic
26 buttons, such as the equipment used for supervised

1 foster care visits and other client visits, to assist
2 agencies in ensuring staff safety.

3 (B) Technical assistance and training for safety
4 communications.

5 (2) Training sessions and exercises for self-de-
6 fense and crisis management, provided together with
7 such organizations as local law enforcement.

8 (3) Facility safety improvements, such as bar-
9 rier protection and security cameras.

10 (4) Training in cultural competency, including
11 linguistic training, and training on strategies for de-
12 escalating conflict situations.

13 (5) Training to help social workers, health
14 workers, and human services professionals, work
15 with clients who—

16 (A) have serious mental and substance use
17 disorders; or

18 (B) have behavioral problems and need
19 help coping.

20 (6) Resources and materials to inform and edu-
21 cate staff on safety and awareness measures.

22 (7) Support services, counseling, and additional
23 resources for social workers, health workers, and
24 human services professionals, who have experienced

1 safety issues or trauma-related incidents in the
2 workplace.

3 (8) Installation of a local data incident tracking
4 system to monitor, prevent, and mitigate violence
5 against social workers, health workers, and human
6 services professionals.

7 (9) Other prevention and mitigation measures
8 determined appropriate by the Secretary for safety
9 training, resources, and support for social workers,
10 health workers, and human services professionals.

11 (c) APPLICATION.—

12 (1) IN GENERAL.—A State seeking a grant
13 under subsection (a) shall submit an application to
14 the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and ac-
15 companied by such additional information as the
16 Secretary may require.

17 (2) CONTENTS.—Each application submitted
18 pursuant to paragraph (1) shall—

19 (A) describe the type of agencies that will
20 receive funding through the grant and type of
21 work to be done by such agencies;

22 (B) describe the specific activities for
23 which the grant is sought and include a pro-
24 gram budget; and

1 (C) contain an assurance that the appli-
2 cant will evaluate the effectiveness of the safety
3 measures provided through the grant.

4 (d) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under subsection
5 (a), the Secretary shall give priority to applicants that—

6 (1)(A) demonstrate the greatest need based on
7 documented incidents of violence against social
8 workers, health workers, and human services profes-
9 sionals; and

10 (B) seek to provide assistance to multiple agen-
11 cies employing social workers, health workers, and
12 human services professionals performing services
13 placing such individuals in high-risk and potentially
14 dangerous situations; or

15 (2) seek to enhance existing efforts by the ap-
16 plicant (existing on the date on which the applicant
17 submits the application) to improve the safety of so-
18 cial workers, health workers, and human services
19 professionals.

20 (e) QUALITY ASSURANCE AND COST EFFECTIVE-
21 NESS.—The Secretary shall establish guidelines for ensur-
22 ing the quality and cost effectiveness of the safety meas-
23 ures funded under this section.

24 (f) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall
25 provide technical assistance to recipients of a grant under

1 this section with respect to planning, developing, imple-
 2 menting, reporting, and sustaining safety measures
 3 through the grant.

4 (g) REPORT REQUIREMENT.—Each State receiving a
 5 grant under this section shall submit to the Secretary, not
 6 later than 2 years after receiving such grant, a report that
 7 includes—

8 (1) an assessment of the effectiveness of the ac-
 9 tivities funded in whole or in part with funds award-
 10 ed through the grant;

11 (2) the range and scope of training opportuni-
 12 ties provided through training programs funded in
 13 whole or in part with such funds, including the num-
 14 bers and percentages of social workers, health work-
 15 ers, and human services professionals, engaged in
 16 such training programs; and

17 (3) the incidence of threats to social workers,
 18 health workers, and human services professionals, if
 19 any, and the strategies used to address their safety.

20 (h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

21 (1) The term “health worker” includes—

22 (A) a Community Health Representative
 23 that has completed training under the Commu-
 24 nity Health Representative Program of the In-
 25 dian Health Service under section 107 of the

1 Indian Health Care Improvement Act (25
2 U.S.C. 1616);

3 (B) a health aide or community health
4 practitioner certified under the Community
5 Health Aide Program of the Indian Health
6 Service under section 119 of that Act (25
7 U.S.C. 1616l); and

8 (C) other behavioral health aides and men-
9 tal health aides.

10 (2) The term “Secretary” means the Secretary
11 of Health and Human Services.

12 (3) The term “social work” means—

13 (A) the applied science of helping individ-
14 uals, groups, or communities to enhance or re-
15 store capacity for social and psychosocial func-
16 tioning, and effecting societal changes favorable
17 to such enhancement or restoration for all peo-
18 ple; and

19 (B) the professional application of social
20 work values, principles, and techniques related
21 to the activities described in subparagraph (A),
22 including—

23 (i) diagnosing mental and emotional
24 disorders and providing counseling and

1 psychotherapy services to individuals, fami-
 2 lies, or groups for such disorders; and

3 (ii) helping individuals, families, or
 4 groups to obtain tangible services, includ-
 5 ing personal, protective, informational, ad-
 6 visory, community, housing, education,
 7 health, and mental health services in order
 8 to improve the overall well-being of individ-
 9 uals.

10 (4) The term “social worker” means an indi-
 11 vidual, with a baccalaureate, master’s, or doctoral
 12 degree in social work from an institution of higher
 13 education, who uses knowledge and skills to provide
 14 social work services for individuals, families, groups,
 15 communities, organizations, or society in general.

16 (5) The term “urban Indian organization” has
 17 the meaning given such term in section 4 of the In-
 18 dian Health Care Improvement Act (25 U.S.C.
 19 1603).

20 (i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—To carry
 21 out this section, there is authorized to be appropriated
 22 \$10,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2021 through 2025.

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