AN ACT

To forestall the loss of research talent by establishing a temporary early career research fellowship program.

1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-

2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.
This Act may be cited as the “Supporting Early-Career Researchers Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.
Congress finds the following:

(1) The Nation’s universities and industrial research labs are facing unprecedented budget pressure as part of the COVID–19 health crisis, resulting in considerably fewer openings for research and teaching positions.

(2) Emergency funding is needed to forestall the loss of research talent likely to occur if early-career researchers are forced to seek employment outside of research due to the sharp economic decline caused by the COVID–19 health crisis.

(3) The future of America’s defense will rely on advanced technologies to maintain its military superiority over its rivals, including China. These technologies will require new levels of scientific and engineering aptitude and understanding. Early career researchers will play a critical role in the development of these technologies, and the loss of an entire generation of researchers due to the COVID–19 pandemic will be detrimental to the United States national security.
SEC. 3. EARLY-CAREER RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM.

(a) In General.—The Director of the National Science Foundation may establish a 2-year pilot program to award grants to highly qualified early-career investigators to carry out an independent research program at the qualified institution of higher education chosen by such investigator, to last for a period not greater than 2 years.

(b) Selection Process.—The Director of the National Science Foundation shall select grantees under subsection (a) from among citizens, nationals, and lawfully admitted permanent resident aliens of the United States.

(c) Outreach.—The Director shall conduct program outreach to recruit fellowship applicants—

(1) from all regions of the country;

(2) from historically underrepresented populations in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; and

(3) who graduate from or intend to carry out research at a variety of types of institutions of higher education, including—

(A) Historically Black Colleges and Universities;

(B) Hispanic-Serving Institutions;

(C) Tribal Colleges and Universities; and
(D) institutions of higher education that
are not among the top 50 institutions in annual
Federal funding for research.

(d) SPECIAL CONSIDERATION.—The Director shall
give special consideration to an application from an indi-
vidual who graduated from or is intending to carry out
research at an institution of the type listed in subsection
(c)(3).

(e) REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the con-
clusion of the second year of the pilot program, the Direc-
tor shall submit a report to Congress that includes—

(1) statistical summary data on fellowship
awardees disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender,
age, years since completion of doctoral degree, and
institution type;

(2) an assessment, drawing on feedback from
the research community and other sources of infor-
mation, of the effectiveness of the pilot program for
mitigating the loss of research talent due to the pan-
demic; and

(3) if determined effective, a plan for perma-
nent implementation of the pilot program.

(f) QUALIFIED INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION
DEFINED.—The term “qualified institution of higher edu-
cation” has the meaning given the term in section 102
of the Higher Education Act of 1965, except that such
term does not include an institution described in sub-
section (a)(1)(C) of such section.

SEC. 4. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated to the Direc-
tor of the National Science Foundation $250,000,000 for
each of fiscal years 2021 through 2022 to carry out the
activities in this Act.

Passed the House of Representatives May 18, 2021.

Attest: CHERYL L. JOHNSON,

Clerk.