117TH CONGRESS  
2D Session  

H. R. 6843

To amend the National and Community Service Act of 1990 to establish an Office of Civic Bridgebuilding within the Corporation for National and Community Service, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 25, 2022

Mr. Kilmer (for himself, Mr. Barr, Mrs. McBath, Mr. Timmons, Mr. Jeffries, Mr. Reed, Mr. Courtney, Mr. Katko, Mr. Jones, Mr. Fitzpatrick, Mrs. Dingell, Mr. Upton, Mr. Deutch, Miss González-Colón, Mrs. Murphy of Florida, Mr. Thompson of Pennsylvania, Mr. Phillips, and Mr. Bacon) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

A BILL

To amend the National and Community Service Act of 1990 to establish an Office of Civic Bridgebuilding within the Corporation for National and Community Service, 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,
3 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.
4 This Act may be cited as the “Building Civic Bridges
5 Act”.

SEC. 2. CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING.

Subtitle H of title I of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12653 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“PART VI—CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING

“SEC. 198T. OFFICE OF CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING.

“(a) Establishment and Duties.—Subject to the requirements of section 195(b), the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation may designate an Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding within the Corporation to administer an Office of Civic Bridgebuilding (in this section referred to as the ‘Office’) to carry out the following:

“(1) Administer the grant program described in subsection (c) to support civic bridgebuilding across the Nation, including establishing standardized criteria to track the effectiveness of projects and activities funded under such program, which shall be based on principles of scientific research.

“(2) Support the Corporation in providing training in civic bridgebuilding skills and techniques (with the consideration and input of best practices collected by the Office)—

“(A) for participants (including individuals who have been selected to be participants) of a program receiving assistance under a national service law; and
“(B) upon request, for an organization
that receives assistance under a national service
law or that is carrying out a program in which
participants described in subparagraph (A) are
participating.

“(3) Select the members of the Advisory Com-
mittee under subsection (b).

“(4) Support research and evaluations on civic
bridgebuilding and the dissemination of that infor-

mation, including through—

“(A) evaluation and oversight of the grant
program described in subsection (c);

“(B) collaboration (including through the
evaluation of the activities of the Corporation
relating to civic bridgebuilding and civic en-
gagement) between the Office and other offices
(such as the Office of Research and Evalua-
tion), teams, or individuals within the Corpora-
tion as the Corporation determines necessary;

and

“(C) the creation of a public research base
that monitors national metrics for civic
bridgebuilding and convenes research focused
on evaluating the extent to which civic
bridgebuilding and civic engagement activities
strengthen or weaken such bridgebuilding and engagement in the United States.

“(5) Activate a public conversation about the importance of civic bridgebuilding by convening and coordinating civic bridgebuilding programs, providing resources, networking, and collaboration opportunities to the field, which may include—

“(A) network cultivation to strengthen the community of those involved, interested, or engaged in the civic bridgebuilding field, including through activities such as—

“(i) in-person and virtual events for the public to showcase impactful practices, bring civic bridgebuilding leaders together, present relevant research, and explore emerging civic bridgebuilding needs;

“(ii) organizing peer-learning opportunities to facilitate conversations within the field of civic bridgebuilding;

“(iii) organizing and distributing lists of civic bridgebuilding leaders, organizations, and groups in the civic bridgebuilding field; and

“(iv) coordinating national communications among civic bridgebuilding lead-
ers, including through the promotion of civic bridgebuilding programs and sharing stories of local impact; and

“(B) developing or distributing resources to expand best practices in the civic bridgebuilding field, including through—

“(i) the curation of a digital resource hub focused on sharing resources from entities that receive grants under subsection (c), other civic bridgebuilding leaders and programs, or the research base; and

“(ii) the production of new resources, trainings, or best practices based on learnings from the civic bridgebuilding field.

“(b) ADVISORY COMMITTEE.—

“(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established within the Office of Civic Bridgebuilding an Advisory Committee (in this subsection referred to as the ‘Committee’).

“(2) MEMBERS.—

“(A) SELECTION.—The Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding shall select 9 members of an Advisory Committee, including a Chairperson of the Committee, and ensure that such Com-
mittee is comprised of civic bridgebuilding leaders who represent diverse ideological, religious, racial, regional, or ethnic communities, and with relevant experience and expertise from the civic bridgebuilding field.

“(B) TERMS OF SERVICE.—A member of the Committee shall serve for a term of 3 years.

“(3) DUTIES.—The Advisory Committee shall carry out the following:

“(A) Provide advice and consultation to the Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding on the priorities and administration of such Office.

“(B) Conduct an annual review of grants awarded under subsection (c), with a focus to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and identifying any gaps or needs that emerged from previous application cycles.

“(C) Conduct an annual review of the process of awarding grants under subsection (e), including rubrics or metrics for grant selection used by the Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding.

“(D) Review the analysis provided under the peer review process under subsection (c)(5).

“(e) CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING PILOT GRANT PROGRAM.—
“(1) IN GENERAL.—From the amounts appropriated to carry out this subsection, the Corporation (acting through the Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding and in consultation with the Advisory Committee established under subsection (b)) shall carry out a pilot program for a 3-year period (with the possibility of renewal for additional 3-year periods) to award grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible entities to support civic bridgebuilding programs across the Nation.

“(2) GRANT PERIOD.—A grant awarded under this subsection shall be for a 1-year period. There shall be 3 grant cycles under the 3-year pilot program.

“(3) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive a grant under this subsection, an eligible entity shall submit an application to the Corporation at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Corporation may require, including—

“(A) a description of the project that will be funded with the grant;

“(B) an assurance that such project will—

“(i) provide evidence of engaging diverse communities;
“(ii) facilitate the creation or endurance of civic bridgebuilding or address the root causes of polarization as articulated in the research base;

“(iii) cite research supporting the efficacy and impact of the proposed approach for the project; and

“(iv) ensure physical, social, and psychological safety for all participants involved in the project and provide a description of evidence-based best practices for how this goal will be achieved; and

“(C) an assurance that the eligible entity will report outcomes of such project to track effectiveness based on standardized criteria established by the Office of Civic Bridgebuilding under subsection (a)(1) or will evaluate the impact of such project based on principles of scientific research.

“(4) USES OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity receiving a grant under this subsection shall use such grant to carry out a project to advance civic bridgebuilding in communities across the Nation or address the root causes of polarization as articulated in the research base.
“(5) PEER REVIEW PROCESS.—The Corporation shall establish a peer review process which shall include consultation with research communities in the civic bridgebuilding field to analyze the process of awarding grants (and the grants that are awarded) under this subsection.

“(d) COMPTROLLER GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall, on an annual basis, submit to Congress a report, which summarizes and assesses the effectiveness and impact of the activities carried out under grants awarded under subsection (c).

“(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING.—The term ‘civic bridgebuilding’—

“(A) means activities that foster respect between diverse communities, strengthen relationships across lines of difference, and forge a sense of common civic purpose, and which seeks to solve community problems and diminish polarization; and

“(B) includes—

“(i) activities that take place in local communities, where individuals and institutions come together to build empathy,
strengthen belonging, and address local issues; and

“(ii) activities at the field level, where civic bridgebuilding leaders work together to share research and best practices, learn from one another, and grow civic bridgebuilding efforts.

“(2) CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING LEADER.—The term ‘civic bridgebuilding leader’ means an individual who leads civic bridgebuilding programs or efforts.

“(3) CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING PROGRAM.—The term ‘civic bridgebuilding program’ means a program, project, or activity which embodies or works to achieve the goals of civic bridgebuilding.

“(4) CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.—The term ‘civic engagement’ means an individual or collective action designed to address a public concern or an unmet human, educational, health care, environmental, or public safety need.

“(5) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligible entity’ means a nonprofit entity, public institution, elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, religious group, or consortium of any such entities.
“(6) Public Institution.—The term ‘public institution’ means a library, unit of local government, or other entity expending public funds or performing public functions.

“(7) Research.—The term ‘research’ means research which embodies principles of scientific research.

“(8) Research Base.—The term ‘research base’ means any publications that contain observations, analysis, and conclusions based on principles of scientific research with respect to the challenges of political and social polarization in the United States, and practical approaches to strengthen social cohesion, foster a sense of national connection, or improve intergroup relations in divided communities.

“(f) Authorization of Appropriations.—There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section $25,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2023 through 2025.”.

SEC. 3. TABLE OF CONTENTS.

The table of contents in section 1(b) of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12501 note) is amended by inserting at the end of the item relating to subtitle H of title I, the following:

“PART VI—CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING

“Sec. 198T. Office of Civic Bridgebuilding.”.