

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1679

To amend title VII of the Public Health Service Act to authorize assistance for increasing workforce diversity in the professions of physical therapy, occupational therapy, respiratory therapy, audiology, and speech-language pathology, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 18, 2021

Mr. CASEY (for himself 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 amend title VII of the Public Health Service Act to authorize assistance for increasing workforce diversity in the professions of physical therapy, occupational therapy, respiratory therapy, audiology, and speech-language pathology, 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 “Allied Health Work-
5 force Diversity Act of 2021”.

1 **SEC. 2. INCREASING WORKFORCE DIVERSITY IN THE PRO-**
 2 **FESSIONS OF PHYSICAL THERAPY, OCCUPA-**
 3 **TIONAL THERAPY, RESPIRATORY THERAPY,**
 4 **AUDIOLOGY, AND SPEECH-LANGUAGE PA-**
 5 **THOLOGY.**

6 Title VII of the Public Health Service Act is amend-
 7 ed—

8 (1) by redesignating part G (42 U.S.C. 295j et
 9 seq.) as part H; and

10 (2) by inserting after part F (42 U.S.C. 294n
 11 et seq.) the following new part:

12 **“PART G—INCREASING WORKFORCE DIVERSITY**
 13 **IN THE PROFESSIONS OF PHYSICAL THER-**
 14 **APY, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY, RES-**
 15 **PIRATORY THERAPY, AUDIOLOGY, AND**
 16 **SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY**

17 **“SEC. 783. SCHOLARSHIPS AND STIPENDS.**

18 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may award grants
 19 and contracts to eligible entities to increase educational
 20 opportunities in the professions of physical therapy, occu-
 21 pational therapy, respiratory therapy, audiology, and
 22 speech-language pathology for eligible individuals by—

23 “(1) providing student scholarships or stipends,
 24 including for—

25 “(A) completion of an accelerated degree
 26 program;

1 “(B) completion of an associate’s, bach-
2 elor’s, master’s, or doctoral degree program;
3 and

4 “(C) entry by a diploma or associate’s de-
5 gree practitioner into a bridge or degree com-
6 pletion program;

7 “(2) providing assistance for completion of pre-
8 requisite courses or other preparation necessary for
9 acceptance for enrollment in the eligible entity; and

10 “(3) carrying out activities to increase the re-
11 tention of students in one or more programs in the
12 professions of physical therapy, occupational ther-
13 apy, respiratory therapy, audiology, and speech-lan-
14 guage pathology.

15 “(b) CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS.—In
16 carrying out subsection (a), the Secretary shall take into
17 consideration the recommendations of national organiza-
18 tions representing the professions of physical therapy, oc-
19 cupational therapy, respiratory therapy, audiology, and
20 speech-language pathology, including the American Phys-
21 ical Therapy Association, the American Occupational
22 Therapy Association, the American Speech-Language-
23 Hearing Association, the American Association for Res-
24 piratory Care, the American Academy of Audiology, and
25 the Academy of Doctors of Audiology.

1 “(c) REQUIRED INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS FOR
2 AWARD RECIPIENTS.—

3 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may require
4 recipients of awards under this section to report to
5 the Secretary concerning the annual admission, re-
6 tention, and graduation rates for eligible individuals
7 in programs of the recipient leading to a degree in
8 any of the professions of physical therapy, occupa-
9 tional therapy, respiratory therapy, audiology, and
10 speech-language pathology.

11 “(2) FALLING RATES.—If any of the rates re-
12 ported by a recipient under paragraph (1) fall below
13 the average for such recipient over the 2 years pre-
14 ceding the year covered by the report, the recipient
15 shall provide the Secretary with plans for imme-
16 diately improving such rates.

17 “(3) INELIGIBILITY.—A recipient described in
18 paragraph (2) shall be ineligible for continued fund-
19 ing under this section if the plan of the recipient
20 fails to improve the rates within the 1-year period
21 beginning on the date such plan is implemented.

22 “(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

23 “(1) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—The term ‘eligible
24 entity’ means an education program that—

25 “(A) is accredited by—

1 “(i) the Council on Academic Accredi-
 2 tation in Audiology and Speech-Language
 3 Pathology or the Accreditation Commission
 4 for Audiology Education;

5 “(ii) the Commission on Accreditation
 6 in Physical Therapy Education;

7 “(iii) the Accreditation Council for
 8 Occupational Therapy Education; or

9 “(iv) the Commission on Accreditation
 10 for Respiratory Care; and

11 “(B) is carrying out a program for recruit-
 12 ing and retaining students underrepresented in
 13 the professions of physical therapy, occupa-
 14 tional therapy, respiratory therapy, audiology,
 15 and speech-language pathology (including racial
 16 or ethnic minorities, or students from disadvan-
 17 taged backgrounds).

18 “(2) ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUAL.—The term ‘eligible
 19 individual’ means an individual who—

20 “(A) is a member of a class of persons who
 21 are underrepresented in the professions of phys-
 22 ical therapy, occupational therapy, respiratory
 23 therapy, audiology, speech-language pathology
 24 (including individuals who are racial or ethnic
 25 minorities, or are from disadvantaged back-

1 grounds or individuals with a disability (as de-
 2 fined in section 3(1) of the Americans with Dis-
 3 abilities Act of 1990, or who have an individual-
 4 ized education program, as defined in section
 5 602 of the Individuals with Disabilities Edu-
 6 cation Act, are covered under section 504 of the
 7 Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or have other docu-
 8 mentation establishing the student’s disability
 9 (as such term is defined in section 3 of the
 10 Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990)));

11 “(B) has a financial need for a scholarship
 12 or stipend; and

13 “(C) is enrolled (or accepted for enroll-
 14 ment) at an audiology, speech-language pathol-
 15 ogy, respiratory therapy, physical therapy, or
 16 occupational therapy program as a full-time
 17 student at an eligible entity.

18 “(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
 19 is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
 20 \$8,000,000 for the first fiscal year commencing after the
 21 date of enactment of the Allied Health Workforce Diver-
 22 sity Act of 2021 and each of the 4 succeeding fiscal
 23 years.”.

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