

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4153

To amend the Older Americans Act of 1965 to authorize a national network of statewide senior legal hotlines, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 15, 2023

Mr. CARTWRIGHT (for himself, Ms. NORTON, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. KILMER, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. BUCHANAN, Mr. LYNCH, Mr. CARSON, Ms. WILD, Ms. TITUS, Mr. BACON, Mr. HARDER of California, Ms. TOKUDA, and Mr. GRIJALVA) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

A BILL

To amend the Older Americans Act of 1965 to authorize a national network of statewide senior legal hotlines, 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 “Senior Legal Hotline
5 Act of 2023”.

1 **SEC. 2. STATEWIDE SENIOR LEGAL HOTLINES.**

2 Subtitle B of title VII of the Older Americans Act
3 of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3058aa et seq.) is amended by adding
4 at the end the following:

5 **“SEC. 753. STATEWIDE SENIOR LEGAL HOTLINES.**

6 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

7 “(1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—

8 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The term ‘eligible en-
9 tity’ means a nonprofit organization or a part-
10 nership described in subparagraph (B) that—

11 “(i) provides legal assistance to older
12 individuals at no cost to such individuals;
13 and

14 “(ii)(I) operates a senior legal hotline
15 in existence on the date on which the enti-
16 ty submits an application under subsection
17 (c); or

18 “(II) demonstrates the capacity to
19 provide legal assistance to older individuals
20 through a statewide senior legal hotline.

21 “(B) PARTNERSHIP.—A partnership de-
22 scribed in this subparagraph is a partnership
23 between—

24 “(i) multiple nonprofit organizations;

25 or

1 “(ii) one or more nonprofit organiza-
2 tions with one or more State or local gov-
3 ernments.

4 “(2) SENIOR LEGAL HOTLINE.—The term ‘sen-
5 ior legal hotline’ means a program or partnership of
6 programs that—

7 “(A) provides legal services, such as coun-
8 seling, advice, advocacy, information, referrals,
9 and other services, as appropriate, to older indi-
10 viduals on a broad range of civil legal issues;

11 “(B) provides such services by telephone
12 (and may provide such services by additional
13 forms of communication), regardless of whether
14 such services are provided 24 hours a day and
15 7 days a week;

16 “(C) provides such services at no cost to
17 the older individuals receiving such services;

18 “(D) serves older individuals with the
19 greatest social need and greatest economic need
20 as a target population for such services; and

21 “(E) develops partnerships with other pro-
22 grams and legal assistance providers to ensure
23 that older individuals who need more extensive
24 services, including representation, have access
25 to such services.

1 “(3) STATEWIDE SENIOR LEGAL HOTLINE.—

2 The term ‘statewide senior legal hotline’ means a
3 senior legal hotline that serves older individuals
4 throughout a State.

5 “(b) AUTHORIZATION.—The Assistant Secretary may
6 award grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible entities
7 that submit an application under subsection (c) to estab-
8 lish or operate a statewide senior legal hotline in accord-
9 ance with the requirements under subsection (d).

10 “(c) APPLICATION PROCESS.—

11 “(1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity seeking a
12 grant under this section shall submit to the Assist-
13 ant Secretary an application at such time, in such
14 manner, and containing such information as the As-
15 sistant Secretary may reasonably require, including
16 the contents described in paragraph (2).

17 “(2) CONTENTS.—An application submitted
18 under paragraph (1) shall contain, at a minimum,
19 each of the following:

20 “(A) An identification of the State to be
21 served by the statewide senior legal hotline.

22 “(B) A plan indicating how the eligible en-
23 tity will satisfy each requirement under sub-
24 section (d) with respect to establishing or oper-
25 ating a statewide senior legal hotline.

1 “(C) An assurance that the eligible entity
2 will be able to provide, from non-Federal funds,
3 an amount equal to not less than 25 percent of
4 the estimated amount awarded through the
5 grant under this section. An eligible entity may
6 use in-kind contributions to meet the matching
7 requirement under this subparagraph.

8 “(D) A description of the certification
9 process the eligible entity has in place to ensure
10 that staff members of and volunteers serving
11 the statewide senior legal hotline will have no
12 conflict of interest (including any financial or
13 substantive conflict of interest) in providing
14 services through the hotline.

15 “(3) SELECTION.—The Assistant Secretary
16 shall, in selecting eligible entities to receive a grant
17 under this section—

18 “(A) consider—

19 “(i) the extent to which the applica-
20 tion submitted by the eligible entity under
21 paragraph (2) meets the requirements of
22 such paragraph; and

23 “(ii) the demonstrated capacity of the
24 eligible entity to administer a statewide
25 senior legal hotline, including the experi-

1 ence and history of the eligible entity in
2 delivering high-quality advice, assistance,
3 and other legal services, to older individ-
4 uals through low-cost and innovative meth-
5 ods; and

6 “(B) ensure that no 2 eligible entities re-
7 ceiving a grant under this section for a fiscal
8 year are planning to establish or operate a
9 statewide senior legal hotline that serves the
10 same State for such fiscal year.

11 “(d) REQUIREMENTS.—Each eligible entity receiving
12 a grant under this section shall, in establishing or oper-
13 ating a statewide senior legal hotline supported by such
14 grant—

15 “(1) provide for a sufficient number of appro-
16 priately trained attorneys, paralegals, other staff
17 members, and volunteers to ensure effective delivery
18 of the services described in subsection (a)(2)(A);

19 “(2) collaborate with the appropriate State
20 agency, including any legal assistance developer of
21 the State agency, and free or low-cost legal service
22 providers throughout the State, including those who
23 provide free legal assistance to older individuals, to
24 maximize coordination and cost-effective delivery of
25 legal assistance to older individuals;

1 “(3) strive to maximize coordination in the de-
2 livery of legal assistance to older individuals in the
3 State, including legal assistance funded by the Legal
4 Services Corporation under the Legal Services Cor-
5 poration Act (42 U.S.C. 2996 et seq.), legal assist-
6 ance supported by a grant under part B of title III
7 of this Act, legal assistance provided by a law school
8 clinic, and any other legal assistance provided at no
9 cost to the persons receiving the assistance;

10 “(4) build effective communication within the
11 aging network operating in the State to provide co-
12 ordinated assistance and referrals as appropriate;

13 “(5) establish mechanisms to make referrals for
14 representation and other assistance beyond the scope
15 of the hotline to—

16 “(A) other divisions or projects of the
17 same legal aid agency of which the hotline is a
18 division or project;

19 “(B) other legal aid agencies;

20 “(C) private attorneys, including those pro-
21 viding pro bono legal services;

22 “(D) providers included in the aging net-
23 work operating in the State;

24 “(E) advocacy and assistance programs for
25 older individuals; or

1 “(F) any other individuals or entities, as
2 appropriate; and

3 “(6) conduct outreach through the aging net-
4 work operating in the State, and by other means, to
5 inform older individuals about the availability of the
6 services provided by the hotline, specifically tar-
7 geting older individuals with the greatest economic
8 need and greatest social need.

9 “(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
10 is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
11 \$10,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2024 through 2028.”.

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