

118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 5910

To prioritize educating and training for existing and new environmental health professionals.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 6, 2023

Mr. THANEDAR introduced the following bill

OCTOBER 26, 2023

Referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## A BILL

To prioritize educating and training for existing and new environmental health professionals.

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 “Environmental Health  
5 Workforce Act of 2023”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1           (1) The environmental health workforce is vital  
2           to protecting the health and safety of the public.

3           (2) For years, State and local governmental  
4           public health agencies have reported substantial  
5           workforce losses and other challenges to the environ-  
6           mental health workforce.

7           (3) According to the Association of State and  
8           Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and the Na-  
9           tional Association of County and City Health Offi-  
10          cials (NACCHO), more than 50,600 State and local  
11          environmental health workforce jobs have been lost  
12          since 2008. This represents approximately 22 per-  
13          cent of the total State and local environmental  
14          health workforce.

15          (4) In the coming years, the retiring Baby  
16          Boomer Generation will lead to a further decrease in  
17          the environmental health workforce.

18          (5) According to the National Environmental  
19          Health Association, more than 67 percent of Tribal  
20          environmental health programs, 64 percent of State  
21          environmental health programs, and 60 percent of  
22          local environmental health programs report insuffi-  
23          cient staffing capacity to respond to new issues pre-  
24          sented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Industry work-

1       ers also reported insufficient access to training and  
2       high levels of burnout.

3           (6) Currently, only 27 States require a creden-  
4       tial for environmental health workers that is an im-  
5       partial, third-party endorsement of an individual’s  
6       professional knowledge and experience.

7           (7) Educating and training existing and new  
8       environmental health professionals should be a na-  
9       tional public health goal.

10 **SEC. 3. MODEL STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR**  
11                           **CREDENTIALING ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**  
12                           **WORKERS.**

13       (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the  
14       date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and  
15       Human Services, in coordination with appropriate na-  
16       tional professional organizations, Federal, State, local,  
17       and tribal governmental agencies, and private-sector and  
18       nongovernmental entities, shall develop model standards  
19       and guidelines for credentialing environmental health  
20       workers.

21       (b) PROVISION OF STANDARDS AND TECHNICAL AS-  
22       SISTANCE.—The Secretary of Health and Human Services  
23       shall provide to State, local, and tribal governments—

24           (1) the model standards and guidelines devel-  
25       oped under subsection (a); and

1           (2) technical assistance in credentialing envi-  
2           ronmental health workers.

3 **SEC. 4. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOP-**  
4 **MENT PLAN.**

5           (a) IN GENERAL.—To ensure that programs and ac-  
6           tivities (including education, training, and payment pro-  
7           grams) of the Department of Health and Human Services  
8           for developing the environmental health workforce meet  
9           national needs, the Secretary of Health and Human Serv-  
10          ices shall develop a comprehensive and coordinated plan  
11          for such programs and activities that—

12           (1) includes performance measures to more  
13          clearly determine the extent to which these programs  
14          and activities are meeting the Department’s stra-  
15          tegic goal of strengthening the environmental health  
16          workforce;

17           (2) identifies and communicates to stakeholders  
18          any gaps between existing programs and activities  
19          and future environmental health workforce needs  
20          identified in workforce projections of the Health Re-  
21          sources and Services Administration;

22           (3) identifies actions needed to address such  
23          identified gaps; and



1           (2) educational backgrounds of environmental  
2 health workers;

3           (3) whether environmental health workers are  
4 credentialed or registered, and what type of creden-  
5 tial or registration each worker has received;

6           (4) State requirements for continuing education  
7 for environmental health workers;

8           (5) whether State, local, and city health depart-  
9 ments and independent environmental health agen-  
10 cies track continuing education units for their envi-  
11 ronmental health workers; and

12           (6) how frequently any exam required to qualify  
13 environmental health workers is updated and re-  
14 viewed to ensure that the exam is consistent with  
15 current law.

16       (b) SELECTION OF STATES.—The report described in  
17 subsection (a) shall be based upon the examination of such  
18 best practices with respect to 3 States that have  
19 credentialing requirements for environmental health work-  
20 ers (such as Maryland, Ohio, and Washington) and 3  
21 States that do not have such requirements (such as Indi-  
22 ana, Iowa, and Pennsylvania).

23 **SEC. 6. PUBLIC SERVICE LOAN FORGIVENESS.**

24       Section 455(m) of the Higher Education Act of 1965  
25 (20 U.S.C. 1087e(m)) is amended in paragraph (3)(B)—

1 (1) in clause (i), by striking “or” at the end;

2 (2) in clause (ii), by striking the period at the

3 end and inserting “; or”; and

4 (3) by adding at the end the following:

5 “(iii) a full-time job as an environ-

6 mental health worker (as defined in section

7 7 of the Environmental Health Workforce

8 Act of 2023) who is accredited, certified,

9 or licensed in accordance with applicable

10 law.”.

11 **SEC. 7. DEFINITION.**

12 In this Act, the terms “environmental health worker”

13 and “environmental health workforce” refer to public

14 health workers who investigate and assess hazardous envi-

15 ronmental agents in various environmental settings and

16 develop, promote, and enforce guidelines, policies, and

17 interventions to control such hazards.

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