

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 9929

To provide funding to the Bureau of Prisons, States, and localities to carry out mental health screenings and provide referrals to mental healthcare providers for certain corrections officers.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 4, 2024

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To provide funding to the Bureau of Prisons, States, and localities to carry out mental health screenings and provide referrals to mental healthcare providers for certain corrections officers.

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 “Corrections Officer
5 Blake Schwarz Suicide Prevention Act of 2024”.

6 **SEC. 2. GRANT PROGRAM.**

7 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 90 days after
8 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Attorney Gen-

1 eral shall establish a grant program (hereinafter referred
2 to as the “Program”) to implement and administer mental
3 health screenings to corrections officers at an eligible de-
4 tention center and refer such individuals to mental
5 healthcare providers, as applicable.

6 (b) GRANT AUTHORITY.—In carrying out the Pro-
7 gram, the Attorney General may award a grant on a com-
8 petitive basis to an eligible recipient in accordance with
9 this section.

10 (c) APPLICATION.—The Attorney General may award
11 a grant under the Program to a State or locality, deter-
12 mined by the Attorney General to carry out a project de-
13 scribed in subsection (d).

14 (d) ELIGIBLE RECIPIENTS.—

15 (1) HIRING REQUIREMENT.—To be eligible for
16 a grant under the Program, a State or locality shall
17 hire a mental health liaison staff member for eligible
18 detention centers under its jurisdiction. One mental
19 health liaison staff member may cover multiple eligi-
20 ble detention centers. The mental health liaison staff
21 member shall be responsible for—

22 (A) coordinating efforts between the eligi-
23 ble detention center and mental health pro-
24 viders in the local region to help corrections of-
25 ficers;

1 (B) coordinating with the Advisory Board
2 to ensure that the Program is operating in ac-
3 cordance with this section; and

4 (C) overseeing and coordinating activities
5 of the outreach team (as described in subsection
6 (g)).

7 (2) PLAN.—To be eligible for a grant under the
8 Program, a State or locality shall submit a plan to
9 the Advisory Board established under section 4 ex-
10 plaining how the Program established shall meet the
11 criteria under subsection (e).

12 (e) ELIGIBLE PROJECTS.—Grant funds awarded
13 under the Program may only be used to:

14 (1) Develop and administer a brief mental
15 health screening survey as required under subsection
16 (f).

17 (2) Develop any technology necessary for an eli-
18 gible detention center to provide the survey under
19 paragraph (1).

20 (3) Hire any staff necessary for an eligible de-
21 tention center to provide the survey under paragraph
22 (1).

23 (4) Establish an outreach team pursuant to
24 subsection (g) to refer a correctional officer, if their
25 responses to the survey indicate severe mental ill-

1 ness, to a local mental healthcare provider for fur-
2 ther assessment and outreach, admission (when nec-
3 essary), and support for that officer in re-estab-
4 lishing ties with a mental health provider.

5 (5) Pay the salary or overtime pay of an out-
6 reach team as established pursuant to subsection
7 (g), including providing direct funding to an eligible
8 detention center to compensate staff members.

9 (f) BRIEF MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING SURVEY.—
10 The mental health screening survey developed and admin-
11 istered under subsection (e) shall:

12 (1) Be composed of 5 to 10 questions.

13 (2) Be based on the questions and content of
14 the Employee Assistance Program standard mental
15 health screening or the Bureau of Prisons initial
16 mental health screening standard.

17 (3) Seek to identify severe mental illnesses, in-
18 cluding schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and major
19 depression.

20 (4) Ask individuals about the symptoms of se-
21 vere mental illness they may be experiencing or have
22 experienced and any prior use of mental health-re-
23 lated medications or inpatient care.

24 (5) Identify the individual's place of residence.

1 (6) Be administered by a trained staff member
2 at the eligible detention center to all corrections offi-
3 cers.

4 (g) OUTREACH TEAM.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—A referral to a mental
6 healthcare provider, pursuant to subsection (e), shall
7 be made by a mental health outreach team that is
8 composed of—

9 (A) mental healthcare professionals and
10 clinicians from mental healthcare centers local
11 to the eligible detention center;

12 (B) staff from the eligible detention center,
13 when applicable; and

14 (C) a mental health liaison staff member
15 who shall oversee the outreach team.

16 (2) ALERT.—If an individual has been deter-
17 mined to need a referral to a mental healthcare pro-
18 vider, the mental health outreach team shall be noti-
19 fied immediately by eligible detention center staff
20 and informed, when applicable.

21 **SEC. 3. BUREAU OF PRISONS.**

22 Not later than 90 days after the date of the enact-
23 ment of this Act, the Director of the Bureau of Prisons
24 shall establish a program that is substantially similar to
25 the Program established under section 2 to implement and

1 administer mental health screenings to corrections officers
2 at eligible detention centers and refer such officers to men-
3 tal healthcare providers, as applicable.

4 **SEC. 4. ADVISORY BOARD ON PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION.**

5 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 60 days after
6 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Attorney Gen-
7 eral shall establish an Advisory Board to manage and ad-
8 minister the Program under section 2, with the responsi-
9 bility to:

10 (1) Evaluate and approve the plans submitted
11 by a State or locality as required under section 2
12 and to ensure that grant funding is used as specified
13 under section 2.

14 (2) Monitor plans submitted by the Bureau of
15 Prisons and advise the Attorney General on compli-
16 ance to ensure that funding to the Bureau of Pris-
17 ons is used as specified under section 2.

18 (3) Provide technical assistance to a State or
19 locality to help with the implementation and admin-
20 istration of mental health screening and referral pro-
21 grams.

22 (4) Create a working group of mental
23 healthcare providers, jail and prison administrators,
24 law enforcement officials, and operators of existing
25 mental health screening and referral programs to

1 share best practices on how to create and implement
2 mental health screening and referral programs that
3 have the largest impact on reducing crime rates and
4 improving employment and wage rates for individ-
5 uals released from prison or jail.

6 (5) Work in coordination with mental health
7 outreach teams as established under section 2, to en-
8 sure that the Program is operating as required.

9 (6) Determine if a grant awarded by the Pro-
10 gram is not meeting the requirements of the Pro-
11 gram and mandate necessary changes and reduce
12 funding if such changes are not made.

13 (b) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Advisory Board
14 shall provide technical assistance to the Bureau of Pris-
15 ons, States, and localities in setting up and administering
16 the Program and shall identify evidence-backed models for
17 the administration of mental health screening and referral
18 programs that the Bureau of Prisons, States, and local-
19 ities can look to when designing their own programs.

20 (c) MEMBERSHIP.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Attorney General shall
22 appoint members to serve on the Advisory Board es-
23 tablished under subsection (a) who have expertise
24 with respect to—

1 (A) designing and administering mental
2 health screenings and providing referrals for
3 corrections officers;

4 (B) mental healthcare within prisons or
5 jails; or

6 (C) program evaluation using rigorous ex-
7 perimental and quasi-experimental statistical
8 methods.

9 (2) NUMBER OF MEMBERS.—The Attorney
10 General shall appoint as many members to the Advi-
11 sory Board established under subsection (a) as
12 deemed necessary by the Attorney General.

13 **SEC. 5. FUNDING.**

14 (a) AUTHORIZATION.—There is authorized to be ap-
15 propriated to the Attorney General to carry out this Act—

16 (1) \$50,000,000 for fiscal year 2025;

17 (2) \$55,000,000 for fiscal year 2026;

18 (3) \$60,000,000 for fiscal year 2027;

19 (4) \$65,000,000 for fiscal year 2028; and

20 (5) \$70,000,000 for fiscal year 2029.

21 (b) DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS.—Of the amounts
22 made available under subsection (a), the Attorney General
23 shall use—

(1) 90 percent of such amount for a grant program under sections 2 and 3, as applicable, of which—

(A) 20 percent shall go to the Bureau of Prisons for screening and referral implementation activities at Federal prisons;

(B) 20 percent shall go to States as competitive grants to carry out screening and referral implementation activities at State prisons; and

(C) 50 percent shall go to localities as competitive grants to carry out screening and referral implementation activities at locally-administered jails;

(2) 5 percent of such amount to carry out evaluation activities under section 5; and

(3) 5 percent of such amount for the Advisory Board to provide technical assistance to the Bureau of Prisons, States, and localities and for general operations as described in section 4.

SEC. 6. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) STATE.—The term “State” means any State of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Is-

1 lands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Common-
2 wealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

3 (2) LOCALITY.—The term “locality” means any
4 city, county, township, town, borough, parish, vil-
5 lage, or other general purpose political subdivision of
6 a State.

7 (3) MENTAL HEALTHCARE PROVIDER.—The
8 term “mental healthcare provider” means a fully-li-
9 censed professional or group of professionals who di-
10 agnose mental health conditions and provide mental
11 health treatment, and who operate near to the rel-
12 evant jail or prison. Mental healthcare providers may
13 provide services at hospitals or at private clinics.

14 (4) MENTAL HEALTHCARE CENTER.— The
15 term “mental healthcare center” means any facility
16 where one or more mental healthcare providers offer
17 mental health services, such as a hospital or private
18 clinic.

19 (5) JAIL OR PRISON ADMINISTRATOR.—The
20 term “jail or prison administrator” means any indi-
21 vidual who has been appointed to a supervisory posi-
22 tion in a Federal, State, or local incarceration facil-
23 ity by the Federal Government, a State, or a local-
24 ity.

1 (6) LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIAL.—The term
2 “law enforcement official” means any officer of an
3 entity administered by a locality, State, or the Fed-
4 eral Government that exists primarily to prevent and
5 detect crime and enforce criminal laws who is des-
6 ignated by the leadership of that entity to represent
7 the entity.

8 (7) CORRECTIONS OFFICERS.—Any officer or
9 employee of any prison, jail, or other detention facil-
10 ity, operated by, or under contract to, a Federal gov-
11 ernmental agency, whose job responsibilities include
12 providing for the custody of incarcerated individuals.

13 (8) ELIGIBLE DETENTION CENTER.—The term
14 “eligible detention center” means any prison or jail
15 administered by the Bureau of Prisons or a State or
16 any jail administered by a State or locality.

17 (9) SEVERE MENTAL ILLNESS.—The term “se-
18 vere mental illness” means one or more mental, be-
19 havioral, or emotional disorders that results in seri-
20 ous functional impairment and substantially inter-
21 feres with or limits major life activities.

