

111<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS  
1<sup>ST</sup> SESSION

# H. R. 1490

To establish a grant program to assist in the provision of safety measures to protect social workers and other professionals who work with at-risk populations.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 12, 2009

Mr. MOORE of Kansas (for himself, Ms. DELAURO, Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, Mr. HOLT, Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Mr. CHANDLER, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. OLVER, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. HINCHEY, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Ms. SCHWARTZ, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Mr. KENNEDY, Ms. KILPATRICK of Michigan, Mr. MEEKS of New York, Mr. KUCINICH, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. SABLAN, Mr. PAYNE, and Mr. CARNAHAN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

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## A BILL

To establish a grant program to assist in the provision of safety measures to protect social workers and other professionals who work with at-risk populations.

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 “Teri Zenner Social  
5 Worker Safety Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1           (1) According to the Occupational Safety and  
2           Health Administration, some 2 million American  
3           workers are victims of job-related violence each year.

4           (2) On August 17, 2004, Teri Zenner, a social  
5           worker and case manager with Johnson County  
6           Mental Health Center, was stabbed and killed dur-  
7           ing a routine, in-home visit with a client.

8           (3) Based on OSHA's most recently published  
9           "Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence for  
10          Health Care & Social Service Workers", 48 percent  
11          of all non-fatal injuries from occupational assaults  
12          and violent acts occurred in the fields of health care  
13          and social services.

14          (4) A major study by the American Federation  
15          of State, County, and Municipal Employees, found  
16          that 70 percent of front-line child welfare workers  
17          had been victims of violence or threats in the line of  
18          duty. A review of the 585 exit interviews found that  
19          90 percent of former child welfare workers experi-  
20          enced verbal threats, 30 percent experienced physical  
21          attacks, and 13 percent had been threatened with  
22          weapons.

23          (5) Based on 2000 Bureau of Labor Statistics  
24          findings, social service workers in the public sector,  
25          including social workers and case workers, are ap-

1 proximately 7 times more likely to be the victims of  
2 violent assaults while at work than are workers in  
3 the private sector.

4 (6) States such as California, New Jersey, and  
5 Washington, and the National Association of Social  
6 Workers, have all developed various safety programs  
7 with safety guidelines for social workers and case  
8 workers to follow while in the course of their employ-  
9 ment.

10 (7) Social workers and case workers elevate  
11 service to others above self-interest, and draw on  
12 their knowledge, values and skills to help people in  
13 need and to address social problems. Job-related vio-  
14 lence against social workers and case workers affects  
15 these hard-working and dedicated individuals, their  
16 families, their clients, and their communities  
17 throughout the United States.

18 (8) There is a need to increase public awareness  
19 and understanding of job-related violence in the field  
20 of social services and to meet the needs of social  
21 workers and case workers in preventing such vio-  
22 lence. Although not every incident of job-related vio-  
23 lence can be prevented, many can, and the severity  
24 of injuries sustained by social workers and case  
25 workers can be reduced.

1 **SEC. 3. SOCIAL WORKER SAFETY GRANT PROGRAM.**

2 (a) GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary of Health  
3 and Human Services (the “Secretary”), through the Sub-  
4 stance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration,  
5 is authorized to award grants to States to provide safety  
6 measures to social workers and other professionals work-  
7 ing with violent, drug-using, or other at-risk populations.

8 (b) USE OF FUNDS.—Grants awarded pursuant to  
9 subsection (a) may be used to provide or support the fol-  
10 lowing safety measures:

11 (1) The procurement and installation of safety  
12 equipment, including communications systems, such  
13 as GPS tracking devices and GPS cell telephones to  
14 assist agencies in locating staff, and any technical  
15 assistance and training for safety communications.

16 (2) Training exercises for self-defense and crisis  
17 management.

18 (3) Facility safety improvements.

19 (4) The provision of pepper spray for self-de-  
20 fense.

21 (5) Training in cultural competency, including  
22 linguistic training, and training on strategies for de-  
23 escalating a situation that could turn volatile.

24 (6) Training to help workers who work with  
25 mentally ill community or that have behavioral prob-  
26 lems and need help coping.

1           (7) Educational resources and materials to  
2 train staff on safety and awareness measures.

3           (8) Other activities determined by the Secretary  
4 to be safety training.

5           (c) APPLICATION.—

6           (1) IN GENERAL.—A State seeking a grant  
7 under subsection (a) shall submit an application to  
8 the Secretary, at such time, in such manner, and ac-  
9 companied by such additional information as the  
10 Secretary may require.

11           (2) CONTENTS.—Each application submitted  
12 pursuant to paragraph (1) shall—

13           (A) describe the type of agencies that will  
14 be receiving funding from the grant and type of  
15 work done by such agencies;

16           (B) describe the specific activities for  
17 which assistance under this section is sought  
18 and include a program budget; and

19           (C) contain an assurance that the appli-  
20 cant will evaluate the effectiveness of the safety  
21 measure provided with funds received under the  
22 grant.

23           (d) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under subsection  
24 (a), the Secretary shall give priority to those applicants  
25 that—

1           (1) demonstrate the greatest need based on  
2           documented incidents; and

3           (2) seek to provide assistance to multiple agen-  
4           cies.

5           (e) **QUALITY ASSURANCE AND COST-EFFECTIVE-**  
6 **NESS.**—The Secretary shall establish guidelines for assur-  
7 ing the cost-effectiveness and quality of the safety meas-  
8 ures funded under this section.

9           (f) **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.**—The Secretary may  
10 provide technical assistance to grant recipients with re-  
11 spect to planning, developing, and implementing safety  
12 measures under the grant.

13          (g) **REPORT REQUIREMENT.**—States receiving grants  
14 shall file with the Secretary, not later than 2 years after  
15 the receipt of the grant, information that includes—

16           (1) an assessment of the activities funded in  
17           whole or in part with such grant;

18           (2) the range and scope of training opportuni-  
19           ties, including numbers and percentage of social  
20           workers engaged in the training programs funded in  
21           whole or in part by such grant; and

22           (3) the incidence of threats to social workers, if  
23           any, and the strategies used to address their safety.

1           (h) NON-FEDERAL SHARE.—For any State receiving  
2 a grant under this section, the non-Federal share of any  
3 program to provide safety measures shall be 50 percent.

4           (i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is  
5 authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Health  
6 and Human Services \$5,000,000 for each of fiscal years  
7 2010 through 2014 to carry out this Act.

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