

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 3161

To require the Secretary of Defense to carry out a pilot program to supplement the Transition Assistance Program of the Department of Defense.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 3, 2021

Mrs. BLACKBURN (for herself and Mrs. GILLIBRAND) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Defense to carry out a pilot program to supplement the Transition Assistance Program of the Department of Defense.

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 “Onward to Opportunity
5 Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM TO SUPPLEMENT THE TRANSI-**
7 **TION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM OF THE DE-**
8 **PARTMENT OF DEFENSE THROUGH GRANTS.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense, in con-
10 sultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, shall

1 carry out a pilot program under which the Secretary of
2 Defense provides, through grants, enhanced support and
3 funding to eligible entities to supplement the Transition
4 Assistance Program by providing job opportunities for in-
5 dustry-recognized certifications, job placement assistance,
6 and related employment services directly to covered indi-
7 viduals.

8 (b) SERVICES.—In carrying out the pilot program,
9 the Secretary of Defense shall award grants to eligible en-
10 tities to provide to covered individuals the following serv-
11 ices:

12 (1) Using an industry-validated screening tool,
13 assessments of prior education, work history, and
14 employment aspirations of covered individuals in
15 order to tailor appropriate employment services.

16 (2) Preparation for civilian employment
17 through services such as mock interviews and salary
18 negotiations, training on professional networking
19 platforms, and company research.

20 (3) Several industry-specific learning path-
21 ways—

22 (A) with entry-level, mid-level and senior
23 versions;

24 (B) in fields such as project management,
25 cybersecurity, and information technology;

1 (C) in which each covered individual works
2 with an academic advisor to choose a career
3 pathway and navigate coursework during the
4 training process; and

5 (D) in which each covered individual can
6 earn industry-recognized credentials and certifi-
7 cations, at no charge to the covered individual.

8 (4) Job placement services.

9 (c) PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION
10 MODEL.—The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that the
11 pilot program follows economic opportunity program mod-
12 els in use as of the date of the enactment of this Act that
13 combine industry-recognized certification training, fur-
14 nished by professionals, with online learning staff.

15 (d) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary of Defense shall
16 seek to consult with private entities to identify the best
17 economic opportunity program models for the pilot pro-
18 gram to follow, including economic opportunity models in
19 use as of the date of the enactment of this Act that are
20 furnished through public-private partnerships.

21 (e) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible to receive a grant
22 under the pilot program, an entity shall—

23 (1) follow a job training and placement model;

24 (2) have a well-developed and rigorous practice
25 of program measurement and evaluation that indi-

1 cates program performance and efficiency, with data
2 that is high quality and shareable with partner enti-
3 ties;

4 (3) have established partnerships with entities
5 (such as employers, governmental agencies, and non-
6 profit entities) to provide services described in sub-
7 section (b); and

8 (4) have online training capability to reach
9 rural veterans, reduce costs, and comply with new
10 conditions forced by COVID-19.

11 (f) COORDINATION WITH FEDERAL ENTITIES.—

12 Each grantee under the pilot program shall coordinate
13 with Federal entities, including—

14 (1) the Office of Transition and Economic De-
15 velopment of the Department of Veterans Affairs;
16 and

17 (2) the Veterans' Employment and Training
18 Service of the Department of Labor.

19 (g) PERFORMANCE METRICS.—The Secretary of De-
20 fense shall ensure that performance outcomes of the pilot
21 program—

22 (1) are able to be verified using a third-party
23 auditing method; and

24 (2) include—

1 (A) the number of covered individuals who
2 receive and complete skills training through the
3 pilot program;

4 (B) the number of covered individuals who
5 secure employment through the pilot program;

6 (C) the retention rate for covered individ-
7 uals described in subparagraph (B); and

8 (D) the median salary of covered individ-
9 uals described in subparagraph (B).

10 (h) SITE LOCATIONS.—The Secretary of Defense
11 shall carry out the pilot program at five military installa-
12 tions in the United States where existing economic oppor-
13 tunity program models are successful.

14 (i) ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBLE EXPANSION.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—Each grantee under the pilot
16 program shall assess the feasibility of expanding the
17 virtual training and career placement services of-
18 fered under the pilot program to—

19 (A) members of the reserve components of
20 the Armed Forces; and

21 (B) covered individuals outside the United
22 States.

23 (2) SUBMITTAL TO SECRETARY OF DEFENSE.—

24 Each grantee under the pilot program shall submit

1 to the Secretary of Defense the assessment of the
2 grantee conducted under paragraph (1).

3 (j) DURATION.—The pilot program shall terminate
4 on September 30, 2025.

5 (k) REPORT.—Not later than March 30, 2026, the
6 Secretary of Defense shall submit to the congressional de-
7 fense committees a report that includes—

8 (1) a description of the pilot program, including
9 a description of specific activities carried out under
10 this section;

11 (2) the metrics and evaluations used to assess
12 the effectiveness of the pilot program; and

13 (3) the assessments submitted to the Secretary
14 under subsection (i)(2).

15 (l) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

16 (1) COVERED INDIVIDUAL.—The term “covered
17 individual” means—

18 (A) a member of the Armed Forces partici-
19 pating in the Transition Assistance Program; or

20 (B) a spouse of a member described in
21 subparagraph (A).

22 (2) ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM
23 MODEL.—The term “economic opportunity program
24 model” means a model of programmatic service de-
25 livery that expands economic opportunity and im-

1 proves employment outcomes for members of the
2 Armed Forces transitioning to civilian life and mili-
3 tary spouses through career exploration, job train-
4 ing, and credentialing.

5 (3) MILITARY INSTALLATION.—The term “mili-
6 tary installation” has the meaning given such term
7 in section 2801(c) of title 10, United States Code.

8 (4) TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.—The
9 term “Transition Assistance Program” means the
10 program of the Department of Defense for
11 preseparation counseling, employment assistance,
12 and other transitional services provided under sec-
13 tions 1142 and 1144 of title 10, United States Code.

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