

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 9735

To amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to establish a grant program to enable law students to assist participants and beneficiaries in certain civil enforcement actions, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 16, 2026

Mr. COURTNEY introduced the following bill; which was referred to the
Committee on Education and Workforce

A BILL

To amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to establish a grant program to enable law students to assist participants and beneficiaries in certain civil enforcement actions, 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 “Clinics for Law stu-
5 dents Investigating and Navigating Claims Assistance
6 Act” or the “CLINIC Assistance Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. ERISA CLINICS.**

2 Part 5 of title I of the Employee Retirement Income
3 Security Act of 1974 (29 U.S.C.1131 et seq.) is amended
4 by adding at the end the following:

5 **“SEC. 525. ERISA CLINICS AND PRO BONO PROGRAMS.**

6 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF GRANT PROGRAM.—The
7 Secretary shall provide grants to eligible institutions for
8 the purpose of planning, developing, or operating an attor-
9 ney-supervised clinical program, externship, or pro bono
10 program for law students to improve access to benefits
11 under employee welfare benefit plans.

12 “(b) USE OF FUNDS.—

13 “(1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible institution that
14 receives a grant under this section may use such
15 grant to support programs through which partici-
16 pants and beneficiaries of employee welfare benefit
17 plans can receive representation—

18 “(A) in appeals of benefit denials, includ-
19 ing through the internal claims procedure and
20 external review process of the plan;

21 “(B) in actions brought under section 502;

22 “(C) in actions brought against a partici-
23 pant or beneficiary by a health care provider or
24 facility regarding unpaid out-of-pocket costs;
25 and

26 “(D) in any other action relating to—

1 “(i) the enforcement of title I of this
2 Act; and

3 “(ii) the receipt of benefits under em-
4 ployee welfare benefit plans, as determined
5 by the Secretary.

6 “(2) SUPERVISORY ATTORNEYS.—In addition to
7 the uses specified in paragraph (1), an eligible insti-
8 tution that receives a grant under this section may
9 use a portion of such grant to pay the costs of pro-
10 viding an attorney to supervise a program supported
11 by such grant.

12 “(c) ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION.—In this section, the
13 term ‘eligible institution’ means an accredited law school
14 that is, or is operated by, an institution of higher edu-
15 cation (as defined in section 101(a) of the Higher Edu-
16 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a))).

17 “(d) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive a grant
18 under this section, an eligible institution shall submit to
19 the Secretary an application at such time, in such manner,
20 and containing such information as the Secretary may re-
21 quire.

22 “(e) AMOUNT.—The Secretary may not award more
23 than \$500,000 to an eligible institution for any fiscal year.

24 “(f) EBSA COORDINATION.—

1 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall require
2 benefit advisors of the Employee Benefits Security
3 Administration of the Department of Labor to co-
4 ordinate with eligible institutions operating a pro-
5 gram described in subsection (a) to assist partici-
6 pants and beneficiaries in challenging denied benefit
7 claims.

8 “(2) INFORMATION SHARING.—Such benefit ad-
9 visors may provide participants and beneficiaries
10 with a list of eligible institutions that operate a pro-
11 gram described in subsection (a).

12 “(g) CONSUMER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.—A pro-
13 gram supported under subsection (b)(1) may coordinate
14 with, and make referrals to, a State office of health insur-
15 ance consumer assistance, health insurance ombudsman,
16 or other program that carries out the duties described in
17 section 2793(c) of the Public Health Service Act (42
18 U.S.C. 300gg–93(c)).

19 “(h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
20 are authorized to be appropriated \$5,000,000 to carry out
21 this section for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2030.”.

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