

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 5365

To authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use, to award grants to train community mental wellness workers, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

AUGUST 7, 2026

Mr. BOOKER introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use, to award grants to train community mental wellness workers, 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 “Community Mental
5 Wellness Worker Training Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. TRAINING COMMUNITY MENTAL WELLNESS WORK-**
2 **ERS.**

3 Part D of title V of the Public Health Service Act
4 (42 U.S.C. 290dd et seq.) is amended by adding at the
5 end the following:

6 **“SEC. 554. TRAINING COMMUNITY MENTAL WELLNESS**
7 **WORKERS.**

8 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, acting through
9 the Assistant Secretary, may award grants to eligible enti-
10 ties to implement community mental wellness worker
11 training programs.

12 “(b) USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity that receives
13 a grant under this section shall use the funds received
14 through such grant to carry out a community mental
15 wellness worker training program, which may include—

16 “(1) supporting training, certification, and su-
17 pervision during and after training of community
18 mental wellness workers and community mental
19 wellness supervisors—

20 “(A) to screen for common mental health
21 and substance use conditions; and

22 “(B) to deliver evidence-informed, cul-
23 turally and linguistically competent counseling
24 and interviewing interventions addressing basic
25 psychosocial or psychotherapeutic treatment
26 needs of persons with or at risk for mental and

1 substance use disorders, including safety plan-
2 ning and interventions to reduce suicide risk;
3 and

4 “(2) covering costs associated with—

5 “(A) the acquisition and use of digital
6 platforms to provide the screening, training, su-
7 pervision, and ongoing quality assurance moni-
8 toring, outcomes evaluation, and delivery of evi-
9 dence-based treatments;

10 “(B) the delivery of counseling and inter-
11 viewing interventions described in paragraph
12 (1)(B); and

13 “(C) the clinical supervision (during and
14 after training) of community mental wellness
15 workers and the certification of such workers
16 upon the completion of required training.

17 “(c) COMMUNITY MENTAL WELLNESS TECHNICAL
18 ASSISTANCE.—

19 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may provide
20 appropriate training and technical assistance to eli-
21 gible entities receiving a grant under this section in
22 meeting the requirements of this section, including
23 by—

24 “(A) consulting with such recipients on
25 evidence-based employment practices for com-

1 community mental wellness workers, including as-
2 sistance with integrating community wellness
3 workers into the workflows of such recipients
4 and other eligible entities;

5 “(B) identifying a diverse array of can-
6 didates for community mental wellness worker
7 training; and

8 “(C) identifying behavioral health pro-
9 viders who may benefit from and employ com-
10 munity mental wellness workers.

11 “(2) ADDITIONAL DISSEMINATION OF TECH-
12 NICAL ASSISTANCE.—The information and resources
13 provided by the Secretary under paragraph (1) shall
14 be made available to States, political subdivisions of
15 States, Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations (as
16 defined in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination
17 and Education Assistance Act), outpatient and inpa-
18 tient substance use treatment providers, other com-
19 munity-based behavioral health organizations, and
20 other entities as the Secretary determines appro-
21 priate.

22 “(d) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this sec-
23 tion, the Secretary shall give priority to eligible entities
24 that—

25 “(1) are located—

1 “(A) in an area with rates of poverty and
 2 unemployment that exceed the average in the
 3 United States, as determined by the survey con-
 4 ducted by the Secretary of Commerce commonly
 5 referred to as the ‘American Community Sur-
 6 vey’ (or any successor survey);

7 “(B) in a medically underserved commu-
 8 nity; or

9 “(C) in an area with rates of substance use
 10 that exceed the average in the United States, as
 11 determined by the National Institute on Drug
 12 Abuse; or

13 “(2) are serving communities with rates of indi-
 14 viduals who are dually eligible for both the Medicare
 15 program under title XVIII of the Social Security Act
 16 and the Medicaid program under title XIX of such
 17 Act that exceed the average in the United States.

18 “(e) MALPRACTICE AND NEGLIGENCE SUITS
 19 AGAINST COMMUNITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CLINIC AND
 20 COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTERS.—

21 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as inconsistent with
 22 this subsection, the provisions of section 224, includ-
 23 ing subsections (g), (h), (i), (j), (k), and (l) of such
 24 section, shall apply with respect to acts and omis-
 25 sions of a covered entity that occur during the pe-

riod of the grant under this section, to the same extent and in the same manner as such provisions apply with respect to an entity described in subsection (g)(4) of such section 224, and any officer, governing board member, employee, or contractor of such an entity.

“(2) LIST REQUIRED.—Each covered entity described in paragraph (3)(A) shall submit to the Secretary, and update as necessary, a list of each officer, governing board member, employee, or contractor participating in the entity’s program funded through a grant under this section.

“(3) COVERED ENTITY DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term ‘covered entity’ means an entity that—

“(A) is an eligible entity (as defined in subsection (g)(3)) in receipt of a grant under this section; and

“(B)(i) is an officer, governing board member, or employee of such an entity or a contractor of such an entity who is a physician or other licensed or certified health care practitioner; and

“(ii) is participating in the entity’s program funded through a grant under this sec-

1 tion, as indicated in a list submitted pursuant
2 to paragraph (2).

3 “(4) DELAYED APPLICABILITY.—This sub-
4 section applies beginning with respect to the first
5 full fiscal year that begins after the date of the en-
6 actment of this section.

7 “(f) REPORT.—

8 “(1) SUBMISSION.—The Secretary shall submit
9 to Congress—

10 “(A) not later than one year after the date
11 of enactment of this section, an interim report
12 on the results of the grant program under this
13 section; and

14 “(B) not later than the end of fiscal year
15 2031, a final report of such results.

16 “(2) CONTENTS.—The reports required by
17 paragraph (1) shall each include—

18 “(A) the total number of community men-
19 tal wellness workers participating in the grant
20 program under this section; and

21 “(B) the total number of community men-
22 tal wellness workers who obtained certification
23 through such participation.

24 “(g) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

1 “(1) The term ‘community mental wellness
 2 worker’ means an individual trained and certified by
 3 an eligible entity to assist with providing basic
 4 screening and evidence-based treatments to individ-
 5 uals with a mild to moderate mental health or sub-
 6 stance use disorder, including depression, anxiety,
 7 post-traumatic stress disorder, and alcohol use dis-
 8 order.

9 “(2) The term ‘culturally and linguistically
 10 competent’ means, with respect to the provision of
 11 counseling and interviewing interventions, providing
 12 such services in a manner that acknowledges, and is
 13 responsive to, cultural differences that may derive
 14 from characteristics of the individual receiving such
 15 services, including—

- 16 “(A) gender;
- 17 “(B) sex;
- 18 “(C) sexual orientation;
- 19 “(D) race or ethnicity;
- 20 “(E) nationality;
- 21 “(F) socioeconomic level;
- 22 “(G) immigration status;
- 23 “(H) disability;
- 24 “(I) Tribal affiliation; and
- 25 “(J) veteran status.

1 “(3) The term ‘eligible entity’ means—

2 “(A) a certified community behavioral
3 health clinic (as described in section 223(a) of
4 the Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014);

5 “(B) a community mental health center (as
6 described in section 1913(c));

7 “(C) a hospital that is described in section
8 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986
9 and exempt from taxation under section 501(a)
10 of such Code; and

11 “(D) such other community behavioral
12 health organizations as the Secretary may
13 specify, in consultation with—

14 “(i) State authorities responsible for
15 regulating substance use and mental health
16 providers and facilities receiving reim-
17 bursement under a State plan under title
18 XIX of the Social Security Act (or a waiv-
19 er of such plan); and

20 “(ii) other State substance abuse and
21 mental health agencies.

22 “(4) The term ‘medically underserved commu-
23 nity’ has the meaning given such term in section
24 799B.

25 “(h) FUNDING.—

1 “(1) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

2 There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
3 this section, \$25,000,000 for each of fiscal years
4 2027 through 2031.

5 “(2) ALLOCATION.—Of the funds authorized to
6 be appropriated to carry out this section for a fiscal
7 year, not less than 20 percent shall be reserved for
8 the provision of training and technical assistance
9 under subsection (c).”.

○