

114TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 3944

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to improve education opportunities for physician assistants, and for other purposes.

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IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 5, 2015

Ms. BASS (for herself and Mr. HASTINGS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

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## A BILL

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to improve education opportunities for physician assistants, 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 “Physician Assistant  
5 Higher Education Modernization Act of 2015”.

1 **SEC. 2. INCREASING LOAN LIMITS FOR PHYSICIAN ASSIST-**  
2 **ANTS UNDER THE FEDERAL DIRECT LOAN**  
3 **PROGRAM.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 455 of the Higher Edu-  
5 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087e) is amended by add-  
6 ing at the end the following:

7 “(r) INCREASING LOAN LIMITS FOR PHYSICIAN AS-  
8 SISTANTS.—

9 “(1) MAXIMUM ANNUAL LIMITS.—Notwith-  
10 standing section 428H(d)(2)(A), the maximum an-  
11 nual amount of Federal Direct Unsubsidized Staf-  
12 ford Loans that a graduate student in a physician  
13 assistant education program (as defined in section  
14 799B of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.  
15 295p)) may borrow in any academic year (as defined  
16 in section 481(a)(2)) or its equivalent shall be—

17 “(A) \$40,000 in the first academic year of  
18 such program;

19 “(B) \$40,000 in the second academic year  
20 of such program; and

21 “(C) \$15,000 in the third academic year of  
22 such program.

23 “(2) AGGREGATE LIMITS.—

24 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The maximum aggre-  
25 gate amount of Federal Direct Unsubsidized  
26 Stafford Loans and Federal Direct Stafford

1           Loans that a student described in paragraph  
2           (1) of this subsection may borrow shall be equal  
3           to the maximum aggregate amount of such  
4           loans that any graduate or professional student  
5           enrolled in a program described in subpara-  
6           graph (B) may borrow.

7           “(B) PROGRAM DESCRIBED.—A program  
8           described in this subparagraph is—

9                   “(i) a program in a school of phar-  
10                   macy, public health, allied health, or chiro-  
11                   practic medicine; or

12                   “(ii) a graduate program in health ad-  
13                   ministration or behavioral and mental  
14                   health practice, including clinical psy-  
15                   chology.”.

16           (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by  
17           this section shall apply with respect to award years begin-  
18           ning more than 60 days after the date of enactment of  
19           this Act.

20   **SEC. 3. MAKING PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS ELIGIBLE FOR**  
21                   **CERTAIN LOAN FORGIVENESS.**

22           (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 428K of the Higher Edu-  
23           cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1078–11) is amended—

24                   (1) in subsection (b), by adding at the end the  
25           following:

1           “(19) PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS.—The individual  
2 is a physician assistant employed full-time—

3           “(A) as a physician assistant in a clinical  
4 setting providing primary care services; or

5           “(B) as a member of the physician assist-  
6 ant faculty at a physician assistant education  
7 program (as defined in section 799B of the  
8 Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 295p)).”;

9           (2) in subsection (g), by adding at the end the  
10 following:

11           “(11) PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT.—The term ‘phy-  
12 sician assistant’ means an individual who—

13           “(A) graduated from a physician assistant  
14 education program (as defined in section 799B  
15 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.  
16 295p));

17           “(B) is certified as a physician assistant by  
18 the National Commission on the Certification of  
19 Physician Assistants or any successor organiza-  
20 tion; and

21           “(C) either—

22           “(i) holds a valid and unrestricted li-  
23 cense to practice medicine as a physician  
24 assistant in the State in which the physi-

1           cian assistant practices in a clinical set-  
2           ting; or

3                   “(ii) is qualified for licensure in the  
4           State where the individual is employed as  
5           a full-time physician assistant faculty  
6           member of a physician assistant education  
7           program (as defined in section 799B of the  
8           Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.  
9           295p)).”; and

10           (3) in subsection (h), by striking “fiscal year  
11           2009” and inserting “fiscal year 2017”.

12           (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by  
13           this section shall apply with respect to employment occur-  
14           ring on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

15   **SEC. 4. GRANTS FOR PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAMS AT**  
16                   **HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNI-**  
17                   **VERSITIES AND PREDOMINANTLY BLACK IN-**  
18                   **STITUTIONS.**

19           (a) HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVER-  
20           SITIES.—Section 723 of the Higher Education Act of  
21           1965 (20 U.S.C. 1136a) is amended—

22                   (1) in subsection (a)(1), by inserting “physician  
23           assistant studies,” after “allied health,”;

24                   (2) in subsection (b)(2)(A), by inserting “physi-  
25           cian assistant studies,” after “allied health,”; and

1 (3) in subsection (d)—

2 (A) in paragraph (4), by inserting “physi-  
3 cian assistant studies,” after “allied health,”;

4 (B) in paragraph (11), by striking “and”  
5 at the end;

6 (C) by redesignating paragraph (12) as  
7 paragraph (13); and

8 (D) by inserting after paragraph (11) the  
9 following:

10 “(12) in the case of a grant for a physician as-  
11 sistant education program (as defined in section  
12 799B of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.  
13 295p))—

14 “(A) creating or improving facilities for  
15 Internet or other distance education tech-  
16 nologies, including purchase or rental of tele-  
17 communications technology equipment or serv-  
18 ices; and

19 “(B) collaborating with other institutions  
20 of higher education to expand postbaccalaureate  
21 degree offerings; and”.

22 (b) PREDOMINANTLY BLACK INSTITUTIONS.—Sec-  
23 tion 724 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.  
24 1136b) is amended—

1 (1) in subsection (a)(1), by inserting “physician  
2 assistant studies,” after “allied health,”;

3 (2) in subsection (b)(2)(A), by inserting “physi-  
4 cian assistant studies,” after “allied health,”; and

5 (3) in subsection (d)—

6 (A) in paragraph (4), by inserting “physi-  
7 cian assistant studies,” after “allied health,”;

8 (B) by redesignating paragraph (12) as  
9 paragraph (13); and

10 (C) by inserting after paragraph (11) the  
11 following:

12 “(12) in the case of a grant for a physician as-  
13 sistant education program (as defined in section  
14 799B of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.  
15 295p))—

16 “(A) creating or improving facilities for  
17 Internet or other distance education tech-  
18 nologies, including purchase or rental of tele-  
19 communications technology equipment or serv-  
20 ices; and

21 “(B) collaborating with other institutions  
22 of higher education to expand postbaccalaureate  
23 degree offerings; and”.

24 (c) EXTENSION OF AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIA-  
25 TIONS.—Subsections (a) and (b) of section 725 of the

1 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1136c) are each  
2 amended by striking “fiscal year 2009” and inserting “fis-  
3 cal year 2017”.

4 **SEC. 5. PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT POSTBACCALAUREATE OP-**  
5 **PORTUNITIES FOR HISPANIC AMERICANS.**

6 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 514 of the Higher Edu-  
7 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1102c) is amended by add-  
8 ing at the end the following:

9 “(d) PRIORITY FOR PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDU-  
10 CATION PROGRAMS.—The Secretary shall give preference  
11 to an application by an eligible institution for a grant  
12 under this part that demonstrates that the grant funds  
13 awarded under this part will be used to support physician  
14 assistant education programs (as defined in section 799B  
15 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 295p)).”.

16 (b) EXTENSION OF AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIA-  
17 TIONS.—Section 528(a)(2) of the Higher Education Act  
18 of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1103g(a)(2)) is amended—

19 (1) by striking “\$100,000,000 for fiscal year  
20 2009 and”; and

21 (2) by inserting after “such sums as may be  
22 necessary for” the following: “fiscal year 2017 and”.

1 **SEC. 6. GRANTS TO RURAL-SERVING INSTITUTIONS OF**  
2 **HIGHER EDUCATION FOR PHYSICIAN ASSIST-**  
3 **ANT EDUCATION PROGRAMS.**

4 Part Q of title VIII of the Higher Education Act of  
5 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1161q) is amended—

6 (1) in section 861(b), by striking “For the pur-  
7 poses of this section” and inserting “For the pur-  
8 poses of this part”; and

9 (2) by inserting after section 861 the following:

10 **“SEC. 862. GRANTS TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT AND**  
11 **EXPANSION OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDU-**  
12 **CATION PROGRAMS AT RURAL-SERVING IN-**  
13 **STITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.**

14 “(a) GRANTS.—

15 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary is authorized  
16 to award grants on a competitive basis to a rural-  
17 serving institution of higher education or a consor-  
18 tium of such institutions—

19 “(A) to increase, for students from rural  
20 areas, enrollment and graduation rates for  
21 postbaccalaureate physician assistant education  
22 programs;

23 “(B) to train physician assistants in rural  
24 areas through the development of new physician  
25 assistant education programs and the expansion

1 of existing physician assistant education pro-  
2 grams in rural areas; and

3 “(C) to promote economic growth and de-  
4 velopment in rural America through partnership  
5 grants to regional employers and to consortia of  
6 rural-serving institutions of higher education.

7 “(2) DURATION.—A grant awarded under this  
8 section shall be awarded for a period of not longer  
9 than 3 years.

10 “(3) LIMITATION.—A rural-serving institution  
11 of higher education or a consortium of such institu-  
12 tions shall not receive more than one grant under  
13 this section.

14 “(b) APPLICATIONS.—

15 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Each rural-serving institu-  
16 tion of higher education or consortium of such insti-  
17 tutions desiring a grant under this section shall sub-  
18 mit to the Secretary an application at such time, in  
19 such manner, and containing such information as  
20 the Secretary may require.

21 “(2) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this  
22 section, the Secretary shall give priority to applica-  
23 tions that demonstrate the most potential and pro-  
24 pose the most promising and innovative approaches  
25 for—

1           “(A) creating new physician assistant edu-  
2           cation programs in rural areas;

3           “(B) increasing the number of physician  
4           assistants that practice medicine in rural areas;

5           “(C) meeting the employment needs of re-  
6           gional employers of physician assistants with  
7           graduates of physician assistant education pro-  
8           grams at rural-serving institutions of higher  
9           education; and

10           “(D) improving the health of Americans  
11           residing in rural areas.

12           “(c) USE OF FUNDS.—

13           “(1) IN GENERAL.—A rural-serving institution  
14           of higher education or consortium of such institu-  
15           tions that receives a grant under this section shall  
16           use grant funds for the establishment and expansion  
17           of physician assistant education programs in rural  
18           areas.

19           “(2) PARTNERSHIP.—A rural-serving institu-  
20           tion of higher education or a consortium of such in-  
21           stitutions that receives a grant under this section  
22           shall carry out the activities of the grant in partner-  
23           ship with—

24           “(A) one or more regional employers that  
25           employ physician assistants;



1   **“PART BB—PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDUCATION**  
2                                   **ENHANCEMENT**

3   **“SEC. 899. DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM TO SUPPORT PHYSI-**  
4                                   **CIAN ASSISTANT FACULTY PREPARATION.**

5           “(a) GRANTS.—

6                   “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide  
7           grants to not more than 10 institutions of higher  
8           education to develop, expand, and support graduate-  
9           level programs to prepare certified physician assist-  
10          ants to become physician assistant faculty members  
11          in accredited graduate-level physician assistant edu-  
12          cation programs through collaboration between such  
13          a program and an institution of higher education  
14          that awards a graduate degree in education.

15                  “(2) CAP.—No institution of higher education  
16          may receive more than an aggregate of \$600,000  
17          under this section during fiscal years 2017, 2018,  
18          and 2019.

19           “(b) APPLICATION.—

20                   “(1) IN GENERAL.—An institution of higher  
21          education desiring a grant under this section shall  
22          submit to the Secretary, at such time and in such  
23          manner as the Secretary may require, an application  
24          including—

25                                  “(A) a description of the intended collabo-  
26                  ration to develop, expand, and support grad-

1           uate-level programs to prepare certified physi-  
2           cian assistants to become physician assistant  
3           faculty members in accredited graduate-level  
4           physician assistant education programs; and

5                   “(B) an estimate of the number of stu-  
6           dents who will be affected by such collaboration.

7           “(2) PRIORITY.—The Secretary shall give pri-  
8           ority to applications that demonstrate the potential  
9           to maximize quality instruction through the use of  
10          technology.

11          “(c) REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the  
12         date of the first grant under this section, the Secretary  
13         shall submit to Congress a report that—

14                   “(1) describes the steps taken to implement this  
15         section; and

16                   “(2) lists all recipients of grants under this sec-  
17         tion as of the date of such submission.

18          “(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

19                   “(1) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—  
20         The term ‘institution of higher education’ has the  
21         meaning given such term in section 101.

22                   “(2) PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDUCATION PRO-  
23         GRAM.—The term ‘physician assistant education  
24         program’ has the meaning given such term in sec-

1 tion 799B of the Public Health Service Act (42  
2 U.S.C. 295p).

3 “(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There  
4 are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be  
5 necessary to carry out this section for fiscal years 2017  
6 through 2019.

7 **“SEC. 899A. GRANTS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND TECH-**  
8 **NOLOGY IN PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDU-**  
9 **CATION PROGRAMS.**

10 “(a) GRANTS.—

11 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary is authorized  
12 to award grants, on a competitive basis, to not more  
13 than 20 eligible recipients to enhance physician as-  
14 sistant education programs and improve patient  
15 safety by supporting the purchase of infrastructure  
16 and technology, including human patient simulators,  
17 for such programs.

18 “(2) DURATION.—A grant awarded under this  
19 section shall be awarded for a period of not longer  
20 than five years.

21 “(b) APPLICATION.—

22 “(1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible recipient may  
23 apply for a grant under this section by submitting  
24 an application to the Secretary at such time and in  
25 such manner as the Secretary may require that dem-

1       onstrates how the grant funds will be used to im-  
2       prove physician assistant education programs and  
3       patient safety with respect to such programs.

4               “(2) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this  
5       section, the Secretary shall give priority to applica-  
6       tions that demonstrate the potential to—

7                       “(A) increase the number of physician as-  
8       sistant graduates;

9                       “(B) maximize the accessibility of human  
10       patient simulators for physician assistant edu-  
11       cation programs through partnerships between  
12       the grant recipient and other institutions of  
13       higher education; or

14                      “(C) improve the health of the community  
15       and region where the physician assistant edu-  
16       cation program is located.

17       “(c) USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible recipient that re-  
18       ceives a grant awarded under this section may use the  
19       grant for one or more of the following purposes:

20                      “(1) Purchase, rental, or lease of scientific or  
21       laboratory equipment, including human patient sim-  
22       ulators and machines, for educational purposes, in-  
23       cluding instructional and research purposes.

24                      “(2) Construction, maintenance and renovation,  
25       and improvement of classrooms, libraries, labora-

1       tories, and other instructional facilities, including  
2       purchase or rental of telecommunications technology  
3       equipment or services.

4               “(3) Supporting faculty training in the use of  
5       the human patient simulator equipment.

6               “(4) Other activities proposed in the application  
7       submitted pursuant to subsection (b) that—

8                       “(A) contribute to carrying out the pur-  
9       poses of this section; and

10                      “(B) are approved by the Secretary as part  
11       of the review and acceptance of such applica-  
12       tion.

13       “(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

14               “(1) PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDUCATION PRO-  
15       GRAM.—The term ‘physician assistant education  
16       program’ has the meaning given such term in sec-  
17       tion 799B of the Public Health Service Act (42  
18       U.S.C. 295p).

19               “(2) HUMAN PATIENT SIMULATOR.—The term  
20       ‘human patient simulator’ means a computerized  
21       mannequin that is anatomically precise and responds  
22       physiologically to student interventions.

23               “(3) ELIGIBLE RECIPIENT.—The term ‘eligible  
24       recipient’ means a physician assistant education pro-  
25       gram accredited by the Accreditation Review Com-

1 mission on Education for the Physician Assistant,  
2 Inc. (or a successor organization), located in a State  
3 or territory.

4 “(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There  
5 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section  
6 such sums as may be necessary for fiscal year 2017 and  
7 each of the five succeeding fiscal years.”.

○