

114TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3433

To coordinate, manage, and implement the Department of Labor’s evaluation and research programs, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 28, 2016

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

A BILL

To coordinate, manage, and implement the Department of Labor’s evaluation and research programs, 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 “Comprehensive Labor
5 Evaluation and Research Act” or the “CLEAR Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

8 (1) **APPLIED RESEARCH.**—The term “applied
9 research” means research—

1 (A) to gain knowledge or understanding
2 necessary for determining the means by which
3 a recognized and specific need may be met; and

4 (B) that is specifically directed to the ad-
5 vancement of practice concerning the issues and
6 fields under the jurisdiction of the Department.

7 (2) BASIC RESEARCH.—The term “basic re-
8 search” means research—

9 (A) to gain fundamental knowledge or un-
10 derstanding of phenomena and observable fac-
11 tors, without specific application toward proc-
12 esses or products; and

13 (B) for the advancement of knowledge con-
14 cerning the issues and fields under the jurisdic-
15 tion of the Department.

16 (3) CHIEF EVALUATION OFFICER.—The term
17 “Chief Evaluation Officer” means the Chief Evalua-
18 tion Officer of the Office of Labor Evaluation and
19 Research.

20 (4) DEPARTMENT.—The term “Department”
21 means the Department of Labor.

22 (5) DISSEMINATION.—The term “dissemina-
23 tion” means the communication and transfer of the
24 information involved and the results of the scientif-
25 ically valid evaluations and other research involved,

in forms that are understandable, are easily accessible, and are usable or adaptable, by practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and the public, through (to the extent practicable) technical assistance, publications, electronic transfer, and other means.

(6) EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH STANDARDS.—The term “evidence-based research standards” means standards for research (including evaluations)—

(A) that applies rigorous, systematic, and objective methodology to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to programs and activities under the jurisdiction of the Department; and

(B) for which the findings and claims are appropriate to and supported by the methods that have been employed;

(C) that includes, as appropriate to the research being conducted—

(i) employing systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment;

(ii) employing data analyses that are adequate to support the general findings;

1 (iii) relying on measurements or ob-
 2 servational methods that provide reliable
 3 data; and

4 (iv) making claims of causal relation-
 5 ships, if the research has a research design
 6 that substantially eliminates plausible com-
 7 peting explanations for the obtained re-
 8 sults, such as random assignment experi-
 9 ments; and

10 (D) for which the studies and methods are
 11 presented in sufficient detail and clarity to
 12 allow for replication or, at a minimum, to offer
 13 the opportunity to build systematically on the
 14 findings of the research.

15 (7) OFFICE.—The term “Office” means the Of-
 16 fice of Labor Evaluation and Research.

17 (8) RELATED TO LABOR.—The term “related to
 18 labor”, used with respect to an issue, means an issue
 19 under the jurisdiction of the Department.

20 (9) SCIENTIFICALLY VALID EVALUATION.—The
 21 term “scientifically valid”, used with respect to an
 22 evaluation, means an evaluation that—

23 (A) adheres to the highest possible stand-
 24 ards of quality with respect to research design
 25 and statistical analysis;

1 (B) provides an adequate description of
2 what is being evaluated and, to the extent pos-
3 sible, examines the relationship between imple-
4 mentation and impacts of the program or ac-
5 tivities being evaluated;

6 (C) provides an analysis of the results
7 achieved by the program or activities with re-
8 spect to the projected effects for the program or
9 activities;

10 (D) employs experimental designs using
11 random assignment, when feasible and appro-
12 priate, or other research designs or methodolo-
13 gies that allow for the strongest possible causal
14 inferences when random assignment is not fea-
15 sible or appropriate; and

16 (E) may study implementation of the pro-
17 gram or activities through a combination of sci-
18 entifically valid and reliable methods.

19 (10) SCIENTIFICALLY VALID RESEARCH.—The
20 term “scientifically valid”, used with respect to re-
21 search, includes applied research and basic research
22 in which the rationale, design, and interpretation are
23 soundly developed in accordance with evidence-based
24 research standards.

1 (11) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary”
2 means the Secretary of Labor.

3 (12) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The term
4 “technical assistance” means—

5 (A) assistance in identifying, selecting, or
6 designing—

7 (i) evaluations and other research; or

8 (ii) solutions based on evaluations and
9 other research;

10 (B) assistance in interpreting, analyzing,
11 and utilizing statistics and evaluations; and

12 (C) other assistance necessary to applying
13 techniques supported by scientifically valid re-
14 search.

15 **SEC. 3. OFFICE OF LABOR EVALUATION AND RESEARCH.**

16 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established in the
17 Department an Office of Labor Evaluation and Research,
18 to be headed by a Chief Evaluation Officer, as described
19 in subsection (c).

20 (b) MISSION.—The mission of the Office is to coordi-
21 nate, manage, and implement the Department’s evaluation
22 and other research programs. The Office shall collaborate
23 with agencies in the Department, and other Federal agen-
24 cies, to ensure that evaluations of issues related to labor

1 meet evidence-based research standards and that the re-
2 sults of the evaluations are widely disseminated.

3 (c) CHIEF EVALUATION OFFICER.—

4 (1) APPOINTMENT.—The Secretary shall ap-
5 point the Chief Evaluation Officer.

6 (2) QUALIFICATIONS.—To be qualified to be
7 appointed as the Chief Evaluation Officer, an indi-
8 vidual shall have substantial knowledge relating to
9 the functions of the Office, including a high level of
10 expertise in—

11 (A) evaluations, other research, and policy-
12 making using evaluations and other research
13 that meet evidence-based research standards;
14 and

15 (B) the management of the activities de-
16 scribed in subparagraph (A).

17 (3) EXPERT GUIDANCE AND ASSISTANCE.—The
18 Chief Evaluation Officer may establish technical and
19 scientific peer review groups and scientific program
20 advisory committees, for evaluations and other re-
21 search, that the Chief Evaluation Officer determines
22 are necessary to carry out the requirements of this
23 section.

24 (d) FUNCTIONS.—The Chief Evaluation Officer
25 shall—

1 (1) coordinate, manage, and implement a De-
2 partment-wide program of evaluations and other re-
3 search that meet evidence-based research standards;

4 (2) provide leadership in expanding the funda-
5 mental knowledge and understanding of issues re-
6 lated to labor;

7 (3) conduct rigorous, scientifically valid evalua-
8 tions and other research (including basic research
9 and applied research), that will assist agencies in the
10 Department to measure the effectiveness of pro-
11 grams and activities and progress in meeting and ex-
12 ceeding goals and outcomes;

13 (4) assist agencies in the Department in meet-
14 ing statutory requirements for evaluations and re-
15 ports;

16 (5) assist agencies in the Department in estab-
17 lishing and refining structures, resulting from eval-
18 uations and other research that meet evidence-based
19 research standards, for programs, activities, and op-
20 erations;

21 (6) assist agencies in the Department in using
22 findings and other results from evaluations and
23 other research that meet evidence-based research
24 standards;

1 (7) measure the impacts of core programs and
2 activities, evaluate new programs and activities, and
3 test the relative effectiveness of alternative practices
4 for programs and activities;

5 (8) carry out significant data analytics activities
6 to strengthen management, evaluations, and other
7 research, for programs and activities;

8 (9) conduct and evaluate pilot and demonstra-
9 tion programs that will assist in identifying effective
10 approaches in addressing issues related to labor;

11 (10) establish necessary procedures for tech-
12 nical and scientific peer review of the evaluations
13 and other research carried out by the Office;

14 (11) solicit and consider the recommendations
15 of stakeholders in order to ensure there is broad and
16 regular public and professional input in the planning
17 and carrying out of the activities of the Office;

18 (12) identify priority topics that may require
19 long-term evaluation and other research;

20 (13) coordinate evaluation, other research, and
21 related activities carried out by the Office with such
22 evaluation, research, and activities carried out by
23 other agencies in the Federal Government; and

24 (14) widely disseminate evaluation and other re-
25 search results and information through the Clearing-

1 house for Labor Evaluation and Research described
 2 in subsection (f) and through other appropriate
 3 means described in section 2(5), in manners that are
 4 accessible to a broad range of stakeholders.

5 (e) STANDARDS FOR CONDUCT OF EVALUATION AND
 6 RESEARCH.—In carrying out the functions under this sec-
 7 tion, the Chief Evaluation Officer shall ensure that the
 8 related activities—

9 (1) meet evidence-based research standards;

10 (2) utilize rigorous methods that are appro-
 11 priate and feasible;

12 (3) promote best practices that are grounded on
 13 scientifically valid evaluation and other research, as
 14 the case may be;

15 (4) take into account legislative requirements
 16 and reflect the interests and needs of agencies in the
 17 Department and other stakeholders;

18 (5) are objective, neutral, and free of undue in-
 19 fluence or the appearance of such influence;

20 (6) are conducted in a transparent and timely
 21 manner, and that the results of the activities are dis-
 22 seminated in a timely manner; and

23 (7) are conducted in an ethical manner.

24 (f) CLEARINGHOUSE FOR LABOR EVALUATION AND
 25 RESEARCH.—The Chief Evaluation Officer shall maintain

1 a Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research
2 that—

3 (1) reviews evaluations and other research on
4 issues related to labor, to determine if the evalua-
5 tions and other research meet evidence-based re-
6 search standards;

7 (2) promotes accessibility and public awareness
8 of the results of evaluations and other research that
9 meet the standards among practitioners, researchers,
10 policymakers, and the public;

11 (3) encourages the use of reviewed evaluations
12 and other research that meet the standards to in-
13 form decisions relating to appropriate policies and
14 programs and activities;

15 (4) assesses the quality of evaluations and other
16 research that examine the effectiveness of particular
17 policies and programs and activities; and

18 (5) synthesizes evaluations and other research
19 within a topic area, highlights gaps in the literature,
20 and identifies areas in which further evaluations and
21 other research may be needed.

22 (g) PERFORMANCE OF FUNCTIONS.—

23 (1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the func-
24 tions of the Office under this section, the Chief
25 Evaluation Officer may—

1 (A) award grants and enter into contracts
2 and cooperative agreements to carry out activi-
3 ties described in this section, through—

4 (i) a process that complies with re-
5 quirements for full and open competition
6 under chapter 33 of title 41, United States
7 Code; and

8 (ii) a peer review process, when prac-
9 ticable; and

10 (B) provide technical assistance to—

11 (i) support agencies in the Depart-
12 ment to conduct scientifically valid evalua-
13 tions and other research;

14 (ii) coordinate activities, as necessary,
15 with other Departments that gather data;
16 and

17 (iii) assist, as appropriate, other enti-
18 ties conducting evaluations and other re-
19 search.

20 (2) SUBGRANTS.—The Chief Evaluation Officer
21 may authorize entities receiving grants or contracts
22 under this section to award subgrants or sub-
23 contracts to carry out activities described in this sec-
24 tion.

1 (h) REPORT.—The Chief Evaluation Officer shall,
 2 not less often than once every 2 years, prepare and pub-
 3 licly release, including to the Secretary, the Committee on
 4 Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate,
 5 and the Committee on Education and the Workforce of
 6 the House of Representatives, a report that contains—

7 (1) a description of the activities carried out by
 8 the Office, including activities carried out through
 9 grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements fund-
 10 ed by the Office, during the fiscal years prior to the
 11 release of the report;

12 (2) the activities undertaken to widely dissemi-
 13 nate evaluation and other research results and infor-
 14 mation in a manner that is accessible to a broad
 15 range of stakeholders; and

16 (3) a description of how the activities of the Of-
 17 fice are consistent with the principles of scientifically
 18 valid research and the priorities and mission of the
 19 Office.

20 (i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
 21 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
 22 such sums as may be necessary for each of fiscal years
 23 2017 through 2021.

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