

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2126

To strengthen welfare research and evaluation, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 25, 2017

Mr. BUCHANAN introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To strengthen welfare research and evaluation, 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 “What Works to Move
5 Welfare Recipients into Jobs Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. STRENGTHENING WELFARE RESEARCH AND EVAL-**
2 **UATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF A WHAT**
3 **WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE.**

4 Section 413 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C.
5 613) is amended to read as follows:

6 **“SEC. 413. EVALUATION OF TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR**
7 **NEEDY FAMILIES AND RELATED PROGRAMS.**

8 “(a) EVALUATION OF THE IMPACTS OF TANF.—The
9 Secretary shall conduct research on the effect of State pro-
10 grams funded under this part and any other State pro-
11 gram funded with qualified State expenditures (as defined
12 in section 409(a)(7)(B)(i)) on employment, self-suffi-
13 ciency, child well-being, unmarried births, marriage, pov-
14 erty, economic mobility, and other factors as determined
15 by the Secretary.

16 “(b) EVALUATION OF GRANTS TO IMPROVE CHILD
17 WELL-BEING BY PROMOTING HEALTHY MARRIAGE AND
18 RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD.—The Secretary shall con-
19 duct research to determine the effects of the grants made
20 under section 403(a)(2) on child well-being, marriage,
21 family stability, economic mobility, poverty, and other fac-
22 tors as determined by the Secretary.

23 “(c) DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION.—The Sec-
24 retary shall, in consultation with States receiving funds
25 provided under this part, develop methods of dissemi-
26 nating information on any research, evaluation, or study

1 conducted under this section, including facilitating the
2 sharing of information and best practices among States
3 and localities.

4 “(d) STATE-INITIATED EVALUATIONS.—A State
5 shall be eligible to receive funding to evaluate the State
6 program funded under this part or any other State pro-
7 gram funded with qualified State expenditures (as defined
8 in section 409(a)(7)(B)(i)) if—

9 “(1) the State submits to the Secretary a de-
10 scription of the proposed evaluation;

11 “(2) the Secretary determines that the design
12 and approach of the proposed evaluation is rigorous
13 and is likely to yield information that is credible and
14 will be useful to other States; and

15 “(3) unless waived by the Secretary, the State
16 contributes to the cost of the evaluation, from non-
17 Federal sources, an amount equal to at least 25 per-
18 cent of the cost of the proposed evaluation.

19 “(e) CENSUS BUREAU RESEARCH.—

20 “(1) The Bureau of the Census shall implement
21 or enhance household surveys of program participa-
22 tion, in consultation with the Secretary and the Bu-
23 reau of Labor Statistics and make available to inter-
24 ested parties, to allow for the assessment of the out-
25 comes of continued welfare reform on the economic

1 and child well-being of low-income families with chil-
2 dren, including those who received assistance or
3 services from a State program funded under this
4 part or any other State program funded with quali-
5 fied State expenditures (as defined in section
6 409(a)(7)(B)(i)). The content of the surveys should
7 include such information as may be necessary to ex-
8 amine the issues of unmarried childbearing, mar-
9 riage, welfare dependency and compliance with work
10 requirements, the beginning and ending of spells of
11 assistance, work, earnings and employment stability,
12 and the well-being of children.

13 “(2) To carry out the activities specified in
14 paragraph (1), the Bureau of the Census, the Sec-
15 retary, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics shall con-
16 sider ways to improve the surveys and data derived
17 from the surveys to—

18 “(A) address underreporting of the receipt
19 of means-tested benefits and tax benefits for
20 low-income individuals and families;

21 “(B) increase understanding of poverty
22 spells and long-term poverty, including by facili-
23 tating the matching of information to better un-
24 derstand intergenerational poverty;

1 “(C) generate a better geographical under-
 2 standing of poverty such as through State-
 3 based estimates and measures of neighborhood
 4 poverty;

5 “(D) increase understanding of the effects
 6 of means-tested benefits and tax benefits on the
 7 earnings of low-income families; and

8 “(E) improve how poverty and economic
 9 well-being are measured, including through the
 10 use of consumption measures.

11 “(f) RESEARCH AND EVALUATION CONDUCTED
 12 UNDER THIS SECTION.—Research and evaluation con-
 13 ducted under this section designed to determine the effects
 14 of a program or policy (other than research conducted
 15 under subsection (e)) shall use experimental designs using
 16 random assignment or other reliable, evidence-based re-
 17 search methodologies that allow for the strongest possible
 18 causal inferences when random assignment is not feasible.

19 “(g) DEVELOPMENT OF WHAT WORKS CLEARING-
 20 HOUSE OF PROVEN AND PROMISING APPROACHES TO
 21 MOVE WELFARE RECIPIENTS INTO WORK.—

22 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in consulta-
 23 tion with the Secretary of Labor, shall develop a
 24 database (which shall be referred to as the ‘What
 25 Works Clearinghouse of Proven and Promising

1 Projects to Move Welfare Recipients into Work’) of
2 the projects that used a proven approach or a prom-
3 ising approach in moving welfare recipients into
4 work, based on independent, rigorous evaluations of
5 the projects. The database shall include a separate
6 listing of projects that used a developmental ap-
7 proach in delivering services and a further separate
8 listing of the projects with no or negative effects.
9 The Secretary shall add to the What Works Clear-
10 inghouse of Proven and Promising Projects to Move
11 Welfare Recipients into Work data about the
12 projects that, based on an independent, well-con-
13 ducted experimental evaluation of a program or
14 project, using random assignment or other research
15 methodologies that allow for the strongest possible
16 causal inferences, have shown they are proven,
17 promising, developmental, or ineffective approaches.

18 “(2) CRITERIA FOR EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVE-
19 NESS OF APPROACH.—The Secretary, in consultation
20 with the Secretary of Labor and organizations with
21 experience in evaluating research on the effective-
22 ness of various approaches in delivering services to
23 move welfare recipients into work, shall—

24 “(A) establish criteria for evidence of effec-
25 tiveness; and

“(B) ensure that the process for establishing the criteria—

“(i) is transparent;

“(ii) is consistent across agencies;

“(iii) provides opportunity for public comment; and

“(iv) takes into account efforts of Federal agencies to identify and publicize effective interventions, including efforts at the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Education, and the Department of Justice.

“(3) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

“(A) APPROACH.—The term ‘approach’ means a process, product, strategy, or practice that is—

“(i) research-based, based on the results of one or more empirical studies, and linked to program-determined outcomes; and

“(ii) evaluated using rigorous research designs.

“(B) PROVEN APPROACH.—The term ‘proven approach’ means an approach that—

1 “(i) meets the requirements of a
2 promising approach; and

3 “(ii) has demonstrated significant
4 positive outcomes at more than 1 site in
5 terms of increasing work and earnings of
6 participants, reducing poverty and depend-
7 ence, or strengthening families.

8 “(C) PROMISING APPROACH.—The term
9 ‘promising approach’ means an approach—

10 “(i) that meets the requirements of
11 subparagraph (D)(i);

12 “(ii) that has been evaluated using
13 well-designed and rigorous randomized
14 controlled or quasi-experimental research
15 designs;

16 “(iii) that has demonstrated signifi-
17 cant positive outcomes at only 1 site in
18 terms of increasing work and earnings of
19 participants, reducing poverty and depend-
20 ence, or strengthening families; and

21 “(iv) under which the benefits of the
22 positive outcomes have exceeded the costs
23 of achieving the outcomes.

1 “(D) DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH.—The
2 term ‘developmental approach’ means an ap-
3 proach that—

4 “(i) is research-based, grounded in
5 relevant empirically based knowledge, and
6 linked to program-determined outcomes;

7 “(ii) is evaluated using rigorous re-
8 search designs; and

9 “(iii) has yet to demonstrate a signifi-
10 cant positive outcome in terms of increas-
11 ing work and earnings of participants in a
12 cost-effective way.”.

13 **SEC. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

14 The amendment made by this Act shall take effect
15 on October 1, 2017.

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