

115TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2616

To prioritize education and training for current and future members of
the environmental health workforce.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 22, 2018

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

A BILL

To prioritize education and training for current and future
members of the environmental health workforce.

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 “Environmental Health
5 Workforce Act of 2018”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds as follows:

8 (1) The environmental health workforce is vital
9 to protecting the health and safety of the public.

1 (2) For years, State and local governmental
2 public health agencies have reported substantial
3 workforce losses and other challenges to the environ-
4 mental health workforce.

5 (3) According to the Association of State and
6 Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), between 2010
7 and 2016, the size of the public health workforce
8 has decreased by approximately 9,200 workers.

9 (4) In the coming years, the retiring Baby
10 Boomer Generation will lead to a further decrease in
11 the environmental health workforce.

12 (5) Currently, only 28 States require a creden-
13 tial for environmental health workers that is an im-
14 partial, third-party endorsement of an individual's
15 professional knowledge and experience.

16 (6) The 2017 hurricane season has—

17 (A) devastated many cities, counties, and
18 municipalities in Texas, Florida, and Puerto
19 Rico;

20 (B) interrupted safe water supplies;

21 (C) destroyed hospitals, nursing homes,
22 schools, and childcare facilities;

23 (D) disabled electricity power sources that
24 keep our Nation's food and water safe; and

1 (E) flooded homes and commercial build-
 2 ings that will have to be remediated from mold.

3 (7) Disasters such as these demonstrate the
 4 role of the environmental health workforce in assur-
 5 ing that day care centers, schools, hospitals, the
 6 water supply, and food establishments are free from
 7 hazards that might cause serious illness or death.

8 (8) Educating and training existing and new
 9 environmental health workers should be a national
 10 public health goal.

11 **SEC. 3. MODEL STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR**
 12 **CREDENTIALING ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**
 13 **WORKERS.**

14 (a) MODEL STANDARDS.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after
 16 the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of
 17 Health and Human Services, in coordination with
 18 appropriate national professional organizations, Fed-
 19 eral, State, local, and tribal governmental agencies,
 20 and private sector and nongovernmental entities,
 21 shall develop model standards and guidelines for
 22 credentialing environmental health workers.

23 (2) PERMISSIBLE CONTENT.—Model standards
 24 and guidelines developed under paragraph (1) may
 25 include the following:

1 (A) Environmental health workers should
2 understand basic public health principles and
3 the interdisciplinary nature of environmental
4 health.

5 (B) Environmental health workers should
6 understand environmental protection and envi-
7 ronmental health principles and practices.

8 (C) Environmental health workers should
9 understand basic government functions.

10 (D) Environmental health workers should
11 understand and be sensitive to the different cul-
12 tures found in their institutions and commu-
13 nities.

14 (b) PROVISION OF STANDARDS AND TECHNICAL AS-
15 SISTANCE.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Health and
17 Human Services shall provide to State, local, and
18 tribal governments—

19 (A) the model standards and guidelines de-
20 veloped under subsection (a); and

21 (B) technical assistance in implementing
22 such model standards and guidelines for
23 credentialing environmental health workers,
24 which may include providing additional training

to assist in hiring practices that encourage hiring workforce staff who—

(i) understand and respond to changing demographics; and

(ii) promote under-represented populations in reaching effective health solutions.

SEC. 4. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—To ensure that programs and activities (including education, training, and payment programs) administered by the Department of Health and Human Services for developing the environmental health workforce meet national needs, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall develop a comprehensive and coordinated plan for such programs and activities that—

(1) includes performance measures to determine the extent to which these programs and activities are meeting the Department’s strategic goal of strengthening the environmental health workforce;

(2) establishes a strategic goal to strengthen the environmental health workforce using the Healthy People 2020 environmental health workforce objectives of the Department of Health and Human Services as a guide;

1 (3) identifies any gaps in existing programs and
2 activities (as of the date of the plan) with regard to
3 addressing future environmental health workforce
4 needs identified in workforce projections of the
5 Health Resources and Services Administration in
6 collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control
7 and Prevention;

8 (4) recommends actions to address such gaps;

9 (5) identifies best practices to engage under-
10 served communities and promote workforce diversity;
11 and

12 (6) identifies any additional statutory authority
13 that is needed by the Department to implement such
14 actions.

15 (b) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 2
16 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Sec-
17 retary of Health and Human Services shall—

18 (1) submit to the Committee on Health, Edu-
19 cation, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate, and to
20 the Committees on Energy and Commerce and Edu-
21 cation and the Workforce of the House of Rep-
22 resentatives, the plan developed under subsection
23 (a); and

24 (2) post such plan on the website of the De-
25 partment of Health and Human Services.

1 **SEC. 5. REPORTS AND STUDIES.**

2 (a) ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVEL-
3 OPMENT REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after the date
4 of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the
5 United States shall—

6 (1) examine and identify best practices imple-
7 mented in States that are related to training and
8 credentialing requirements for environmental health
9 workers; and

10 (2) submit to the Committee on Health, Edu-
11 cation, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and the
12 Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House
13 of Representatives a report that includes and, where
14 appropriate, evaluates—

15 (A) the types of environmental health
16 workers employed at State and local health de-
17 partments and independent environmental
18 health agencies;

19 (B) the educational backgrounds of such
20 workers;

21 (C) whether such workers are credentialed
22 or registered, and the type of credential or reg-
23 istration as applicable to each worker;

24 (D) the impact of State requirements for
25 continuing education for such workers;

1 (E) the impact of having State and local
 2 health departments and independent environ-
 3 mental health agencies track continuing edu-
 4 cation units for such workers; and

5 (F) the frequency at which a State or local
 6 health department or other entity updates and
 7 reviews any examination required to qualify or
 8 assess environmental health workers to ensure
 9 that such examination is consistent with cur-
 10 rent law.

11 (b) STUDY ON APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF ENVIRON-
 12 MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE AND NATURAL DISASTER
 13 PREPAREDNESS.—Not later than 2 years after the date
 14 of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and
 15 Human Services shall collaborate with appropriate asso-
 16 ciations, organizations, and councils, such as the National
 17 Academy of Medicine, to conduct a study on—

18 (1) environmental health in communities before
 19 and after natural disasters; and

20 (2) the role of environmental health workers to
 21 help improve environmental health.

22 **SEC. 6. DEFINITIONS.**

23 In this Act, the terms “environmental health work-
 24 ers” and “environmental health workforce” refer to public
 25 health workers who—

- 1 (1) investigate and assess hazardous environ-
2 mental agents in various environmental settings; and
- 3 (2) develop, promote, and enforce guidelines,
4 policies, and interventions to control such hazards.

○