

Calendar No. 31

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION**H. R. 1271**

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 6, 2019

Received; read the first time

MARCH 7, 2019

Read the second time and placed on the calendar

AN ACT

To establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs a pilot program instituting a clinical observation program for pre-med students preparing to attend medical school.

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 “Veterans-Specific Edu-
5 cation for Tomorrow’s Health Professionals Act” or the
6 “Vet HP Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING DEPARTMENT OF**
2 **VETERANS AFFAIRS PILOT PROGRAM FOR**
3 **CLINICAL OBSERVATION BY UNDER-**
4 **GRADUATE STUDENTS.**

5 It is the sense of Congress that the pilot program
6 described in section 3(a) should be designed to—

7 (1) increase the awareness, knowledge, and em-
8 pathy of future health professionals toward the
9 health conditions common to veterans;

10 (2) increase the diversity of the recruitment
11 pool of future physicians of the Department; and

12 (3) expand clinical observation opportunities for
13 all students by encouraging students of all back-
14 grounds to consider a career in the health profes-
15 sions.

16 **SEC. 3. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS PILOT PRO-**
17 **GRAM FOR CLINICAL OBSERVATION BY UN-**
18 **DERGRADUATE STUDENTS.**

19 (a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—The Secretary of Veterans
20 Affairs shall carry out a pilot program for a one-year pe-
21 riod, beginning not later than August 15, 2021, to provide
22 certain students described in subsection (d) a clinical ob-
23 servation experience at medical centers of the Department
24 of Veterans Affairs.

25 (b) **MEDICAL CENTER SELECTION.**—The Secretary
26 shall carry out the pilot program under this section at not

1 fewer than five medical centers of the Department. In se-
2 lecting such medical centers, the Secretary shall ensure
3 regional diversity among such selected medical centers.

4 (c) CLINICAL OBSERVATION SESSIONS.—

5 (1) FREQUENCY AND DURATION.—In carrying
6 out the pilot program, the Secretary shall—

7 (A) provide at least one and not more than
8 three clinical observation sessions at each med-
9 ical center selected during each calendar year;

10 (B) ensure that each clinical observation
11 session—

12 (i) lasts between four and six months;

13 and

14 (ii) to the extent practicable, begins
15 and ends concurrently with one or more
16 academic terms of an institution of higher
17 education (as defined in section 101 of the
18 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
19 1001)); and

20 (C) ensure that the clinical observation
21 sessions provided at a medical center have mini-
22 mal overlap.

23 (2) SESSIONS.—The Secretary shall ensure that
24 the pilot program consists of clinical observation ses-
25 sions as follows:

1 (A) Each session shall allow for not fewer
2 than five students nor greater than 15 students
3 to participate in the session.

4 (B) Each session shall consist of not fewer
5 than 20 observational hours nor greater than
6 40 observational hours.

7 (C) A majority of the observational hours
8 shall be spent observing a health professional.
9 The other observational hours shall be spent in
10 a manner that ensures a robust, well rounded
11 experience that exposes the students to a vari-
12 ety of aspects of medical care and health care
13 administration.

14 (D) Each session shall provide a diverse
15 clinical observation experience.

16 (d) STUDENTS.—

17 (1) SELECTION.—The Secretary shall select to
18 participate in the pilot program under subsection (a)
19 students who are—

20 (A) nationals of the United States;

21 (B) enrolled in an accredited program of
22 study at an institution of higher education; and

23 (C) referred by their institution of higher
24 education following an internal application proc-
25 ess.

1 (2) PRIORITY.—In making such selection, the
2 Secretary shall give priority to each of the following
3 five categories of students:

4 (A) Students who, at the time of the com-
5 pletion of their secondary education, resided in
6 a health professional shortage area (as defined
7 in section 332 of the Public Health Service Act
8 (42 U.S.C. 254e)).

9 (B) First generation college students (as
10 defined in section 402A(h)(3) of the Higher
11 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1067q(a))).

12 (C) Students who have been referred by
13 minority-serving institutions (as defined in sec-
14 tion 371(a) of the Higher Education Act of
15 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1067q(a))).

16 (D) Veterans (as defined in section 101 of
17 title 38, United States Code).

18 (E) Students who indicate an intention to
19 specialize in a health professional occupation
20 identified by the Inspector General of the De-
21 partment under section 7412 of title 38, United
22 States Code, as having a staffing shortage.

23 (3) ASSIGNMENT TO MEDICAL CENTERS.—The
24 Secretary shall assign students selected under para-
25 graph (1) to medical centers selected under sub-

1 section (b) without regard for whether such medical
2 centers have staffing shortages in any health profes-
3 sional occupation pursuant to section 7412 of title
4 38, United States Code.

5 (e) OTHER MATTERS.—In carrying out the pilot pro-
6 gram under this section, the Secretary shall—

7 (1) establish a formal status to facilitate the ac-
8 cess to medical centers of the Department by stu-
9 dent observers participating in the pilot program;

10 (2) establish standardized legal, privacy, and
11 ethical requirements for the student observers, in-
12 cluding with respect to—

13 (A) ensuring that no student observer pro-
14 vides any care to patients while participating as
15 an observer; and

16 (B) ensuring the suitability of a student to
17 participate in the pilot program to ensure that
18 the student poses no risk to patients;

19 (3) develop and implement a partnership strat-
20 egy with minority-serving institutions to encourage
21 referrals;

22 (4) create standardized procedures for student
23 observers;

1 (5) create an online information page about the
2 pilot program on the internet website of the Depart-
3 ment;

4 (6) publish on the online information page cre-
5 ated under paragraph (5) the locations of such cen-
6 ters, and other information on the pilot program,
7 not later than 180 days before the date on which ap-
8 plications are required to be submitted by potential
9 student observers;

10 (7) identify medical centers and specific health
11 professionals participating in the pilot program; and

12 (8) notify the Committees on Veterans' Affairs
13 of the House of Representatives and the Senate of
14 the medical centers selected under subsection (c)
15 within 30 days of selection, to facilitate program
16 awareness.

17 (f) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the com-
18 pletion of the pilot program under subsection (a), the Sec-
19 retary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs
20 of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report
21 on the results of the pilot program, including—

22 (1) the number and demographics of all appli-
23 cants, those accepted to participate in the pilot pro-
24 gram, and those who completed the pilot program;
25 and

8 No additional funds are authorized to be appro-
9 priated to carry out the requirements of this Act. Such
10 requirements shall be carried out using amounts otherwise
11 authorized to be appropriated.

Attest: CHERYL L. JOHNSON,
Clerk.

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