

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8016

To establish a centralized network of peer support warmlines, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 11, 2020

Ms. MUCARSEL-POWELL (for herself, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Ms. JUDY CHU of California, Ms. PORTER, Mr. TRONE, Ms. SHERRILL, and Mr. LOWENTHAL) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

A BILL

To establish a centralized network of peer support warmlines,
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 “Peer Assisted Relief
5 Through Networks of Empathetic Resources and Supports
6 Act of 2020” or the “PARTNERS Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. NATIONAL PEER SUPPORT WARMLINE PROGRAM.**

2 Subpart 3 of part B of title V of the Public Health
3 Service Act (42 U.S.C. 290bb–31 et seq.) is amended by
4 adding at the end the following:

5 **“SEC. 520N. NATIONAL PEER SUPPORT WARMLINE PRO-**
6 **GRAM.**

7 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Assistant Secretary shall es-
8 tablish and maintain a centralized network of peer support
9 warmlines to—

10 “(1) provide accessible resources to individuals
11 seeking mental health support by—

12 “(A) establishing and maintaining a single,
13 toll-free telephone number through which indi-
14 viduals throughout the United States may ac-
15 cess such peer support warmlines; and

16 “(B) coordinating the operation of the tele-
17 phone number established under subparagraph
18 (A) with the National Suicide Prevention Life-
19 line; and

20 “(2) establish best practices for the operation of
21 peer support warmlines.

22 “(b) CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE.—

23 “(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—In carrying out the
24 program under this section, not later than 6 months
25 after the date of enactment of this section, the As-
26 sistant Secretary shall award a grant to, or enter

1 into a cooperative agreement with, not less than 4
2 and not more than 5 entities.

3 “(2) ELIGIBLE USES.—An entity receiving a
4 grant or entering into a cooperative agreement
5 under this section shall—

6 “(A) for any such entity not operating a
7 peer support warmline as of the date on which
8 such entity receives a grant or enters into a co-
9 operative agreement, establish and operate a
10 new center of excellence to operate such peer
11 support warmline; or

12 “(B) for any such entity operating a peer
13 support warmline that meets the criteria speci-
14 fied in paragraph (3) as of the date on which
15 such entity receives a grant or enters into a co-
16 operative agreement, establish a center of excel-
17 lence to support and operate such warmline
18 under the program established under subsection
19 (a).

20 “(3) CONDITIONS.—As a condition on the re-
21 ceipt of a grant under this section, the grant recipi-
22 ent—

23 “(A) may not use grant funds to remu-
24 nerate an individual who operates a peer sup-
25 port warmline for the grant recipient unless

1 such individual is an employee of such grant re-
2 cipient;

3 “(B) shall ensure that employees operating
4 the peer support warmline are qualified peer
5 support specialists and experts in peer support
6 services, including the provision of such services
7 using telehealth;

8 “(C) shall consider hiring employees who
9 speak a language other than English, including
10 a language relevant to the region in which such
11 grant recipient is located, to operate the peer
12 support warmline;

13 “(D) shall require that employees oper-
14 ating the peer support warmline complete—

15 “(i) 2 training courses, consisting of
16 at least a 10-hour introductory training
17 course and, within 2 years of employment,
18 a 40-hour advanced training course, that
19 cover topics including—

20 “(I) peer support values and
21 practices;

22 “(II) active listening skills;

23 “(III) structured sharing of per-
24 sonal or shared experiences; and

25 “(IV) how to—

1 “(aa) connect with an indi-
2 vidual using a peer support
3 warmline with compassion;

4 “(bb) avoid giving advice or
5 providing psychotherapy-like
6 services to an individual using a
7 peer support warmline;

8 “(cc) identify when an indi-
9 vidual using a peer support
10 warmline is experiencing an event
11 constituting a suicide emergency
12 and refer such individual to the
13 National Suicide Prevention Life-
14 line;

15 “(dd) collaborate with other
16 qualified peer support specialists
17 when an individual using a peer
18 support warmline experiences a
19 mental health or suicide crisis;

20 “(ee) refer an individual
21 using a peer support warmline to
22 a community-based peer support
23 organization, other mental health
24 crisis organization, or licensed

1 mental health professional, as ap-
2 propriate; and

3 “(ff) assist an individual
4 who is seeking other peer support
5 services or a referral to mental
6 health services, but refrain from
7 providing any healthcare rec-
8 ommendations; and

9 “(V) any other training course
10 that the Assistant Secretary deter-
11 mines is appropriate; and

12 “(E) shall implement the best practices for
13 operating peer support warmlines, as identified
14 by the study required under subsection (d).

15 “(4) SELECTION.—In awarding grants under
16 this section, the Assistant Secretary shall—

17 “(A) select grant recipients that are lo-
18 cated in different geographic regions of the
19 United States which, collectively, represent the
20 entire United States; and

21 “(B) ensure that each grant recipient is re-
22 sponsible for maintaining a peer support
23 warmline that serves the geographic region in
24 which it is located.

1 “(5) TIMELINE FOR NEW CENTERS OF EXCEL-
2 LENCE.—Any entity described in paragraph (2)(A)
3 shall establish a center of excellence under the pro-
4 gram not later than 6 months after the date on
5 which the entity receives a grant under subsection
6 (b).

7 “(c) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER.—Not later
8 than 30 days after the date of enactment of this section,
9 the Assistant Secretary shall establish a technical assist-
10 ance center to—

11 “(1) serve as the coordinating body between the
12 centers of excellence;

13 “(2) provide technical support to such centers;

14 “(3) disseminate to such centers the best prac-
15 tices for operating peer support warmlines, as identi-
16 fied by the study required under subsection (d); and

17 “(4) enforce the implementation of such best
18 practices in each center of excellence.

19 “(d) STUDY AND REPORT.—

20 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Concurrent with the estab-
21 lishment of the centers of excellence created under
22 subsection (b), the Assistant Secretary shall enter
23 into appropriate arrangements with the National
24 Academies under which the National Academies
25 agree to conduct a study over a 1-year period to

1 identify the best practices for operating a peer sup-
2 port warmline.

3 “(2) ELEMENTS.—The study required under
4 paragraph (1) shall include an assessment of—

5 “(A) any peer support warmline program
6 that existed before the date of enactment of this
7 section, as determined appropriate to include in
8 the study by the National Academies; and

9 “(B) each of the centers of excellence es-
10 tablished pursuant to subsection (b).

11 “(3) REPORT.—The agreement entered into
12 under paragraph (1) shall include a requirement
13 that the National Academies submit to Congress and
14 to the technical assistance center established under
15 subsection (c) a report identifying the best practices
16 for operating a peer support warmline.

17 “(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
18 is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
19 \$55,000,000 for fiscal year 2021 and \$50,000,000 for
20 each of fiscal years 2022 through 2024. Of the funds
21 made available under the preceding sentence, the Assist-
22 ant Secretary shall reserve not less than \$1,000,000 for
23 each fiscal year to carry out subsection (c) and not less
24 than \$1,500,000 to carry out subsection (d).

25 “(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

1 “(1) COMMUNITY-BASED PEER SUPPORT ORGA-
2 NIZATION.—The term ‘community-based peer sup-
3 port organization’ means an organization, private
4 enterprise, or nonprofit organization, that—

5 “(A) provides professional mental health
6 peer support services to a community;

7 “(B) has been operational for not less than
8 2 years; and

9 “(C) has a staff composed of individuals
10 with lived experiences of mental health chal-
11 lenges and recovery, including qualified peer
12 support specialists.

13 “(2) PEER SUPPORT WARMLINE.—The term
14 ‘peer support warmline’ means a telephone and chat
15 support service that is provided by a peer to an indi-
16 vidual who is seeking non-emergent mental health
17 support, but that is not a mental health service or
18 a substitution for mental health services provided
19 through a health care professional or in a health
20 care setting.

21 “(3) QUALIFIED PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST.—
22 The term ‘qualified peer support specialist’ means
23 an individual who—

24 “(A) is recovering or has recovered from a
25 mental health or substance use condition; and

1 “(B) is certified to provide peer support
2 services by a certification process that—

3 “(i) is consistent with the National
4 Practice Guidelines for Peer Supporters
5 published by the National Association of
6 Peer Supporters and the Core Com-
7 petencies for Peer Workers in Behavioral
8 Health Settings published by the Adminis-
9 tration on December 7, 2015; and

10 “(ii) is a process that—

11 “(I) is a national process that
12 the Assistant Secretary determines is
13 appropriate; or

14 “(II) is established by a State in
15 which such individual provides peer
16 support services.”.

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