

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8130

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct an assessment of the capacity of peer specialists of the Department of Veterans Affairs who are women, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 28, 2020

Miss RICE of New York (for herself and Mr. GONZALEZ of Ohio) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct an assessment of the capacity of peer specialists of the Department of Veterans Affairs who are women, 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 “VA Peer Specialists
5 Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. STAFFING IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR PEER SPE-**
2 **CIALISTS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AF-**
3 **FAIRS WHO ARE WOMEN.**

4 (a) ASSESSMENT OF CAPACITY.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after
6 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
7 of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Inspec-
8 tor General of the Department of Veterans Affairs,
9 shall commence an assessment of the capacity of
10 peer specialists of the Department of Veterans Af-
11 fairs who are women.

12 (2) ELEMENTS.—The assessment required by
13 paragraph (1) shall include an assessment of the fol-
14 lowing:

15 (A) The geographical distribution of peer
16 specialists of the Department who are women.

17 (B) The geographical distribution of
18 women veterans.

19 (C) The number and proportion of women
20 peer specialists who specialize in peer coun-
21 seling on mental health or suicide prevention.

22 (D) The number and proportion of women
23 peer specialists who specialize in peer coun-
24 seling on non-mental health related matters.

25 (E) A description of the duties and respon-
26 sibilities of women peer specialists, including

1 number of hours worked per week, to better de-
2 fine, delineate, and standardize qualifications,
3 performance goals, performance duties, and
4 performance outcomes for peer specialists and
5 their managers.

6 (F) Department funds and other resources
7 dedicated to supporting the work of women peer
8 specialists.

9 (b) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the as-
10 sessment required by subsection (a) has commenced, the
11 Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Af-
12 fairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Af-
13 fairs of the House of Representatives a report detailing
14 the findings of the assessment, including the ratio of how
15 many hours were worked by women peer specialists rel-
16 ative to the population of women veterans at each Depart-
17 ment medical center.

18 (c) STAFFING IMPROVEMENT PLAN.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days
20 after submitting the report under subsection (b), the
21 Secretary, in consultation with the Inspector Gen-
22 eral, shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Af-
23 fairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans'
24 Affairs of the House of Representatives a plan,
25 based on the results of the assessment required by

1 subsection (a), to hire additional qualified peer spe-
2 cialists who are women, with special consideration
3 for areas that lack peer specialists who are women.

4 (2) ELEMENTS.—The peer specialist positions
5 included in the plan required by paragraph (1)—

6 (A) shall be non-volunteer, paid positions;

7 and

8 (B) may be part-time positions.

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