

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 6601

To increase access to mental health, substance use, and counseling services
for first responders, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 10, 2025

Ms. TOKUDA (for herself, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Ms. BALINT, Mr. LAMALFA, and Mr. TRAN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, 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 increase access to mental health, substance use, and
counseling services for first responders, 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 “Crisis Assistance and
5 Resources in Emergencies for First Responders Act” or
6 the “CARE for First Responders Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. CRISIS COUNSELING ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 416(a) of the Robert T.
3 Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act
4 (42 U.S.C. 5183(a)) is amended by inserting “and to
5 qualified emergency response providers responding to
6 major disasters” after “victims of major disasters”.

7 (b) DEFINITIONS.—Section 102 of the Robert T.
8 Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act
9 (42 U.S.C. 5122) is amended by adding at the end the
10 following:

11 “(13) PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATOR.—
12 The term ‘public safety telecommunicator’ means a
13 public safety telecommunicator as designated in de-
14 tailed occupation 43–5031 in the Standard Occupa-
15 tional Classification Manual of the Office of Man-
16 agement and Budget issued in 2018, or any suc-
17 cessor designation.

18 “(14) QUALIFIED EMERGENCY RESPONSE PRO-
19 VIDERS.—The term ‘qualified emergency response
20 providers’ means—

21 “(A) emergency response providers (as de-
22 fined in section 2 of the Homeland Security Act
23 of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101)); and

24 “(B) public safety telecommunicators.”.

1 **SEC. 3. SPECIALIZED SERVICES FOR FIRST RESPONDERS.**

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

5 **“SEC. 5200. SPECIALIZED SERVICES FOR FIRST RESPOND-**
6 **ERS.**

7 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 2 years after
8 the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health
9 and Human Services, acting through the Assistant Sec-
10 retary of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Admin-
11 istration, shall develop and carry out a comprehensive pro-
12 gram designed to provide mental health services specifi-
13 cally tailored to qualified emergency response providers.
14 Such program shall—

15 “(1) provide for mental health care availability
16 to qualified emergency response providers on a 24-
17 hour basis;

18 “(2) provide for a qualified emergency response
19 providers hotline operated through the 988 Suicide
20 and Crisis Lifeline under section 520E–3 of the
21 Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 290bb–36c)
22 that is confidential and toll-free, sufficiently staffed
23 by appropriately trained mental health personnel
24 and available at all times; and

25 “(3) provide for outreach to, and education pro-
26 grams for, qualified emergency response providers

1 and their families, with priority given to qualified
2 emergency response providers of major disasters.

3 “(b) BEST PRACTICES RESEARCH.—

4 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall, in con-
5 sultation with the heads of the agencies specified in
6 paragraph (2), conduct or support research on best
7 practices for providing mental health services to, and
8 prevent suicide among, qualified emergency response
9 providers.

10 “(2) AGENCIES SPECIFIED.—The agencies spec-
11 ified in this paragraph are the following:

12 “(A) The Department of Homeland Secu-
13 rity.

14 “(B) The Federal Emergency Management
15 Agency.

16 “(C) The United States Fire Administra-
17 tion.

18 “(D) The National Institute of Mental
19 Health.

20 “(E) The Centers for Disease Control and
21 Prevention.

22 “(F) The Department of Justice.

23 “(c) INFORMATION ADDRESSED IN EDUCATION PRO-
24 GRAMS.—Education provided under subsection (a)(3) shall
25 include information designed to—

1 “(1) remove the stigma associated with mental
2 illness;

3 “(2) encourage qualified emergency response
4 providers to seek treatment and assistance for men-
5 tal illness;

6 “(3) promote skills for coping with mental ill-
7 ness; and

8 “(4) help families of qualified emergency re-
9 sponse providers with—

10 “(A) understanding issues arising from the
11 transition of qualified emergency response pro-
12 viders back into family life and regular work,
13 following the end of a disaster assignment;

14 “(B) identifying signs and symptoms of
15 mental illness; and

16 “(C) encouraging qualified emergency re-
17 sponse providers to seek assistance for mental
18 illness.

19 “(d) PEER SUPPORT COUNSELING PROGRAM.—

20 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall, as
21 part of the comprehensive program under this sec-
22 tion, establish and carry out a peer support coun-
23 seling program, under which active and retired
24 qualified emergency response providers may volun-
25 teer as peer counselors—

1 “(A) to assist other qualified emergency
2 response providers with issues related to mental
3 health, readiness, and readjustment; and

4 “(B) to conduct outreach to qualified
5 emergency response providers and their fami-
6 lies.

7 “(2) ADMINISTRATION.—In carrying out the
8 peer support counseling program under this section,
9 the Secretary shall—

10 “(A) provide for adequate training of indi-
11 viduals who volunteer to serve as peer coun-
12 selors, including training carried out under sec-
13 tion 416(a) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster
14 Relief and Emergency Assistance Act; and

15 “(B) coordinate with such community or-
16 ganizations, State and local governments, insti-
17 tutions of higher education, chambers of com-
18 merce, local business organizations, organiza-
19 tions that provide mental health services, and
20 other organizations as the Secretary considers
21 appropriate.

22 “(e) OTHER COMPONENTS.—The Secretary may take
23 such other actions to carry out the comprehensive program
24 under this section as the Secretary determines appropriate
25 for purposes of reducing the incidence of mental illness

1 and suicide among qualified emergency response pro-
2 viders.

3 “(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

4 “(1) MAJOR DISASTER.—The term ‘major dis-
5 aster’ has the meaning given such term in section
6 102 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and
7 Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5122).

8 “(2) PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATORS.—
9 The term ‘public safety telecommunicator’ means a
10 public safety telecommunicator as designated in de-
11 tailed occupation 43–5031 in the Standard Occupa-
12 tional Classification Manual of the Office of Man-
13 agement and Budget issued in 2018, or any suc-
14 cessor designation.

15 “(3) QUALIFIED EMERGENCY RESPONSE PRO-
16 VIDERS.—The term ‘qualified emergency response
17 providers’ means—

18 “(A) emergency response providers (as de-
19 fined in section 2 of the Homeland Security Act
20 of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101)); and

21 “(B) public safety telecommunicators.

22 **“SEC. 520P. ON-SITE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES GRANTS.**

23 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, acting through
24 the Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance
25 Use, shall award competitive grants to eligible entities to

1 establish a new health care delivery site that is a mobile
2 unit to provide integrated, short-term crisis services to
3 qualified emergency response providers of a major dis-
4 aster. Such services shall be—

5 “(1) linguistically and culturally appropriate;

6 “(2) trauma-informed; and

7 “(3) incorporate disaster behavioral interven-
8 tions.

9 “(b) USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity that receives
10 a grant under this subsection may use funds received
11 through the grant to provide mobile crisis response, sta-
12 bilization, and intervention services, including—

13 “(1) initial support and triage via mobile crisis
14 team visits;

15 “(2) on-site screening and evaluation of mental
16 and behavioral health issues;

17 “(3) assessment of current supports and re-
18 sources;

19 “(4) short-term crisis management throughout
20 a major disaster;

21 “(5) referral for appropriate follow-up services,
22 including sub-acute or acute hospital care;

23 “(6) supportive, collaborative crisis planning;

24 “(7) consultation with existing supports and
25 services; and

1 “(8) self-care techniques and resilience training.

2 “(c) AUTHORIZED PURCHASE OR LEASE.—The Sec-
3 retary may purchase or lease equipment for purposes of
4 carrying out this section, which may include data and in-
5 formation systems (including the costs of repaying the
6 principal of, and paying the interest on, loans for equip-
7 ment).

8 “(d) GRANT TERMS.—

9 “(1) MAXIMUM AMOUNT.—The amount of a
10 grant awarded under subsection (a) may not exceed
11 \$150,000.

12 “(2) DURATION.—The term of a grant awarded
13 under subsection (a) shall be for a period of not less
14 than 6 months. Such term is renewable for a single,
15 additional term so that the total term of the grant
16 does not exceed 2 years.

17 “(e) EVALUATIONS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—
18 The Secretary shall—

19 “(1) evaluate the activities supported by grants
20 awarded under subsection (a), and disseminate, as
21 appropriate, the findings from the evaluation;

22 “(2) provide appropriate information, training,
23 and technical assistance, as appropriate, to eligible
24 entities that receive a grant under this section, to
25 help such entities to meet the requirements of this

1 section, including assistance with selection and im-
2 plementation of evidence-based interventions and
3 frameworks to protect the mental health of qualified
4 emergency response providers; and

5 “(3) identify best practices, as applicable, to
6 improve the identification, assessment, treatment,
7 and timely transition, as appropriate, to additional
8 or follow-up care for qualified emergency response
9 providers who are at risk for mental illness, suicide,
10 and substance abuse, and enhance the coordination
11 of care for such individuals during and after a major
12 disaster, in support of activities supported by grants
13 awarded under subsection (a).

14 “(f) DEFINITIONS.—

15 “(1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligible en-
16 tity’ means a State, local, territorial, or Tribal
17 health department, community health center, rural
18 health clinic, or nonprofit organization that—

19 “(A) is located in or around a major dis-
20 aster area; and

21 “(B) has experience working with qualified
22 mental health professionals in providing mental
23 health, substance use, or counseling services.

24 “(2) MAJOR DISASTER.—The term ‘major dis-
25 aster’ has the meaning given such term in section

1 102 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and
2 Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5122).

3 “(3) MAJOR DISASTER AREA.—The term ‘major
4 disaster area’ has the meaning given such term in
5 section 625.2 of title 20, Code of Federal Regula-
6 tions (or successor regulations).

7 “(4) PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATORS.—
8 The term ‘public safety telecommunicator’ means a
9 public safety telecommunicator as designated in de-
10 tailed occupation 43–5031 in the Standard Occupa-
11 tional Classification Manual of the Office of Man-
12 agement and Budget issued in 2018, or any suc-
13 cessor designation.

14 “(5) QUALIFIED EMERGENCY RESPONSE PRO-
15 VIDERS.—The term ‘qualified emergency response
16 providers’ means—

17 “(A) emergency response providers (as de-
18 fined in section 2 of the Homeland Security Act
19 of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101)); and

20 “(B) public safety telecommunicators.

21 “(6) QUALIFIED MENTAL HEALTH PROFES-
22 SIONAL.—The term ‘qualified mental health profes-
23 sional’ means a health care practitioner or social and
24 human services provider who—

1 “(A) is licensed or certified under State
2 law in the State involved; and

3 “(B) offers services for the purpose of im-
4 proving an individual’s mental health or to treat
5 mental health or substance use disorders, in-
6 cluding—

7 “(i) a physician, allopathic physicians,
8 osteopathic physician, nurse practitioner,
9 or physician assistant with a specialty in
10 mental and psychiatry;

11 “(ii) a health service psychologist;

12 “(iii) a licensed clinical social worker;

13 “(iv) a psychiatric nurse specialist;

14 “(v) a marriage and family therapist;

15 “(vi) a licensed professional counselor;

16 “(vii) a substance use disorder coun-
17 selor;

18 “(viii) an occupational therapist; or

19 “(ix) any other individual who—

20 “(I) has not yet been licensed or
21 certified to serve as a professional list-
22 ed in any of clauses (i) through (viii);
23 and

24 “(II) will serve at a Federally
25 qualified health center (as defined in

1 section 1861(aa)(4) of the Social Se-
2 curity Act) under the supervision of a
3 licensed individual or certified profes-
4 sional so listed.

5 “(g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
6 is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
7 \$5,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2030.”.

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