

116TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 6953

To establish the Pandemic Responder Service Award program to express  
our gratitude to front-line health care workers.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 19, 2020

Ms. SHALALA (for herself and Ms. HOULAHAN) introduced the following bill;  
which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in  
addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subse-  
quently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such  
provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## A BILL

To establish the Pandemic Responder Service Award pro-  
gram to express our gratitude to front-line health care  
workers.

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 “Pandemic Responder  
5 Service Award Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF PANDEMIC RESPONDER SERV-**  
2 **ICE AWARD PROGRAM.**

3 (a) ENTITLEMENT.—Subject to subsection (c), each  
4 qualified health care worker shall be entitled to a pan-  
5 demic responder service award, as determined under sub-  
6 section (b).

7 (b) DETERMINATION OF AWARD.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided under  
9 subsection (c)(3)(B)(ii), in the case of a qualified  
10 health care worker, the amount of the pandemic re-  
11 sponder service award shall be equal to—

12 (A) the applicable percentage of the  
13 amount determined under paragraph (2) for the  
14 calendar year in which the application described  
15 in subsection (c)(2) has been submitted by such  
16 worker and approved by the Secretary; and

17 (B) the applicable percentage of the  
18 amount determined under paragraph (2) for  
19 each of the 3 calendar years subsequent to the  
20 year described in subparagraph (A).

21 (2) ANNUAL AMOUNT.—

22 (A) IN GENERAL.—The amount deter-  
23 mined under this paragraph shall be equal to—

24 (i) for calendar year 2021, \$10,000;  
25 and

(ii) in the case of any calendar year beginning after 2021, the dollar amount in clause (i), as increased by an amount equal to—

(I) such dollar amount; multiplied by

(II) the cost-of-living adjustment determined under section 1(f)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 for such calendar year, determined by substituting “2020” for “2016” in subparagraph (A)(ii) thereof.

(B) ROUNDING.—If any increase under subparagraph (A) is not a multiple of \$100, such increase shall be rounded to the nearest multiple of \$100.

(3) APPLICABLE PERCENTAGE.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of paragraph (1), with respect to any qualified health care worker, the applicable percentage shall be determined in accordance with the following table:

**If the number of days  
during the applicable period  
in which the individual  
provided eligible services was:**

**The applicable  
percentage is:**

Equal to or greater than 180 days .....	100 percent
Greater than 150 days and less than 180 days .....	87.5 percent
Greater than 120 days and less than 151 days .....	75 percent
Greater than 90 days and less than 121 days .....	62.5 percent
Greater than 60 days and less than 91 days .....	50 percent
Greater than 30 days and less than 61 days .....	37.5 percent
Greater than 6 days and less than 31 days .....	25 percent
Less than 7 days .....	12.5 percent.

1 (B) DEATH OR HOSPITALIZATION OF  
2 QUALIFIED HEALTH CARE WORKER.—In the  
3 case of any qualified health care worker who  
4 was hospitalized or died as a result of con-  
5 tracting COVID–19, the applicable percentage  
6 shall be 100 percent.

7 (C) DETERMINING WORK PERFORMED  
8 DURING ILLNESS.—In the case of any qualified  
9 health care worker who was unable to provide  
10 eligible services for any period of days during  
11 the applicable period as a result of contracting  
12 COVID–19, such period of days shall be in-  
13 cluded for purposes of determining the applica-  
14 ble percentage with respect to such worker  
15 under this paragraph.

16 (c) PANDEMIC RESPONDER SERVICE AWARD PRO-  
17 GRAM.—

18 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—

1 (A) PANDEMIC RESPONDER SAVINGS AC-  
2 COUNTS.—Except as provided in subparagraph  
3 (B), not later than 12 months after the date of  
4 enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall es-  
5 tablish the Pandemic Responder Service Award  
6 Program to carry out the purposes of this sec-  
7 tion.

8 (B) PANDEMIC RESPONDER CHILD SAV-  
9 INGS ACCOUNTS.—Not later than December 31,  
10 2021, the Secretary shall establish the Pan-  
11 demic Responder Child Savings Account Pro-  
12 gram to carry out the purposes of paragraph  
13 (5).

14 (2) APPLICATIONS.—

15 (A) IN GENERAL.—An individual claiming  
16 or applying for a pandemic responder service  
17 award under this section shall submit an appli-  
18 cation to the Secretary at such time, in such  
19 manner, and containing such information as the  
20 Secretary may require.

21 (B) INFORMATION MADE AVAILABLE TO  
22 PUBLIC.—Not later than 12 months after the  
23 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary  
24 shall make publicly available all instructions  
25 and forms necessary for an individual to apply

1 for a pandemic responder service award under  
2 this section, including—

3 (i) guidelines regarding the processes  
4 for determining entitlement to, and the  
5 amount of, such award;

6 (ii) processes for the employer of any  
7 individual to certify—

8 (I) that such individual provided  
9 eligible services; and

10 (II) the number of days during  
11 the applicable period in which such in-  
12 dividual provided such services.

13 (C) LIMITATION.—The Secretary shall not  
14 accept or approve any application submitted by  
15 an individual after the date which is 5 years  
16 after the date described in subsection (d)(1)(B).

17 (D) DEATH OF QUALIFIED HEALTH CARE  
18 WORKER.—In the case of an individual de-  
19 scribed in subsection (d)(5)(A) who has died  
20 due to COVID–19 prior to filing an application  
21 described in subparagraph (A), the Secretary  
22 shall establish a procedure to permit the spouse  
23 of such worker or any dependent of such worker  
24 to file an application under such subparagraph  
25 to provide for—

(i) establishment of a pandemic responder savings account (as described in paragraph (3)) on behalf of such spouse or a pandemic responder child savings account (as described in paragraph (5)) on behalf of a dependent described in subparagraph (A) of such paragraph; and

(ii) transfer of any pandemic responder service award to which the deceased individual would otherwise be entitled under this section to such account.

(3) PANDEMIC RESPONDER SAVINGS ACCOUNT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—With respect to each qualified health care worker, the Secretary shall establish and maintain a separate trust account (referred to in this section as a “pandemic responder savings account”) on behalf of such worker, which shall consist of any pandemic responder service award to which such worker is entitled under this section.

(B) TRANSFER TO ACCOUNT.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided under clause (ii), with respect to each qualified health care worker, for each cal-

1           endar year described in paragraph (1) of  
2           subsection (b), the Secretary shall transfer  
3           from the general fund of the Treasury of  
4           the United States to the pandemic re-  
5           sponder savings account of such worker an  
6           amount equal to the applicable percentage  
7           of the amount determined under paragraph  
8           (2) of such subsection with respect to such  
9           year.

10           (ii) EXCEPTION FOR LOAN REPAY-  
11           MENT.—In the case of a qualified health  
12           care worker who, pursuant to their applica-  
13           tion under paragraph (2), elects to apply  
14           the entirety of the pandemic responder  
15           service award to which they are entitled for  
16           a qualified purpose described in subsection  
17           (d)(6)(A), the Secretary shall, during the  
18           calendar year in which such application is  
19           approved, transfer from the general fund  
20           of the Treasury of the United States to the  
21           pandemic responder savings account of  
22           such worker an amount equal to 400 per-  
23           cent of the applicable percentage of the  
24           amount determined under paragraph (2) of  
25           subsection (b) with respect to such year.



1           (4) DISTRIBUTION OF AWARD AMOUNTS.—The  
2       Secretary shall establish such guidelines as may be  
3       necessary to ensure that—

4           (A) funds held in a pandemic responder  
5       savings account are withdrawn or transferred—

6           (i) only for qualified purposes or  
7       transfer to a pandemic responder child sav-  
8       ings account;

9           (ii) at the direction of the qualified  
10      health care worker; and

11          (iii) in such proportion or amount as  
12      is directed by such worker;

13          (B) not greater than 4 withdrawals are  
14      made from such account during any calendar  
15      year; and

16          (C) beneficiary designations for such ac-  
17      count are made in the case of the death of such  
18      worker.

19       (5) PANDEMIC RESPONDER CHILD SAVINGS AC-  
20      COUNT.—

21           (A) IN GENERAL.—At the election of any  
22      qualified health care worker, the Secretary shall  
23      establish and maintain a separate trust account  
24      (referred to in this section as a “pandemic re-  
25      sponder child savings account”) on behalf of

1 any dependent (as designated by such worker)  
2 who, at the time of such election, has not at-  
3 tained 18 years of age and which shall consist  
4 of such amounts as are elected by such worker  
5 to be transferred to such account.

6 (B) INVESTMENT WITHOUT FEES.—Any  
7 amount transferred to a pandemic responder  
8 child savings account shall be invested solely in  
9 United States Treasury bonds. No fees shall be  
10 assessed on participants in the Pandemic Re-  
11 sponder Child Savings Account Program.

12 (C) ACCOUNTS MAY NOT BE ASSIGNED.—  
13 An account established on behalf of an indi-  
14 vidual under the Pandemic Responder Child  
15 Savings Account Program may not be pledged  
16 or assigned to any other person, and any trans-  
17 fer to such account by a qualified health care  
18 worker may not subsequently be transferred or  
19 returned to the pandemic responder savings ac-  
20 count of such worker.

21 (D) DISTRIBUTION OF AMOUNTS IN PAN-  
22 DEMIC RESPONDER CHILD SAVINGS AC-  
23 COUNT.—The Secretary shall establish such  
24 guidelines as may be necessary to ensure that—

1 (i) funds held in a pandemic re-  
2 sponder child savings account are with-  
3 drawn or transferred—

4 (I) only for purposes described in  
5 subparagraphs (A) through (G) of  
6 subsection (d)(6) with respect to the  
7 individual on whose behalf such ac-  
8 count has been established; and

9 (II) except for purposes described  
10 in subparagraph (A) or (B) of sub-  
11 section (d)(6), only after such indi-  
12 vidual has attained 18 years of age  
13 and at the direction of such individual  
14 and in such proportion or amount as  
15 is directed by such individual;

16 (ii) not greater than 4 withdrawals  
17 are made from such account during any  
18 calendar year; and

19 (iii) beneficiary designations for such  
20 account are made in the case of the death  
21 of the individual on whose behalf an ac-  
22 count was established.

23 (d) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this section—

24 (1) APPLICABLE PERIOD.—The term “applica-  
25 ble period” means the period—

1 (A) beginning on January 27, 2020; and

2 (B) ending on the date on which the Sec-  
3 retary of Health and Human Services deter-  
4 mines that the public health emergency declared  
5 by such Secretary under section 319 of the  
6 Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 247d) on  
7 January 31, 2020, with respect to COVID-19,  
8 has ended.

9 (2) COVID-19.—The term “COVID-19”  
10 means the virus SARS-CoV-2 or coronavirus dis-  
11 ease 2019 (COVID-19).

12 (3) DEPENDENT.—The term “dependent” has  
13 the same meaning given such term under section  
14 152 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

15 (4) ELIGIBLE SERVICES.—

16 (A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subpara-  
17 graph (C), the term “eligible services” means,  
18 with respect to any individual, services de-  
19 scribed in subparagraph (B) which were pro-  
20 vided by such individual in person during the  
21 applicable period in a work environment in  
22 which—

23 (i) there was an elevated risk of such  
24 individual contracting COVID-19 (as de-  
25 termined by the Secretary, in consultation

1 with the Director of the Centers for Dis-  
2 ease Control and Prevention and the Occu-  
3 pational Safety and Health Administra-  
4 tion); or

5 (ii) such services were provided to in-  
6 dividuals who had been diagnosed with  
7 COVID–19 or who were at a high risk of  
8 having contracted COVID–19.

9 (B) DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES.—The  
10 services described in this subparagraph are the  
11 following:

12 (i) Emergency medical services (as de-  
13 fined in section 330J(e)(1) of the Public  
14 Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254c–  
15 15(e)(1))).

16 (ii) Health care or patient care serv-  
17 ices within a hospital (including any tem-  
18 porary hospital established for the purpose  
19 of treating large numbers of individuals di-  
20 agnosed with COVID–19), including sani-  
21 tation, security, transportation, and food  
22 services.

23 (iii) Health care services related to  
24 COVID–19 within a medical practice,  
25 health care center, or clinic, including any

1 temporary facility (such as a COVID–19  
2 testing site) which was established in re-  
3 sponse to COVID–19.

4 (iv) Home-based and community-  
5 based work, including—

6 (I) home health care, residential  
7 care, and assistance with activities of  
8 daily living; and

9 (II) any services or care provided  
10 by direct care workers (as defined in  
11 paragraph (16) of section 799B of the  
12 Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.  
13 295p)), personal care aides, and home  
14 health aides.

15 (v) Behavioral health services, includ-  
16 ing mental health services and substance  
17 abuse counseling.

18 (vi) Nursing care, residential care, or  
19 support staff services within a nursing  
20 home or other residential facility, including  
21 community group homes.

22 (vii) Mortuary services.

23 (C) ADDITIONAL SERVICES.—The term  
24 “eligible services” shall include, with respect to  
25 any individual, any services which—

1 (i) were provided by such individual in  
2 person during the applicable period in a  
3 work environment described in clause (i) or  
4 (ii) of subparagraph (A);

5 (ii) are not described in subparagraph  
6 (B); and

7 (iii) have been identified by the Sec-  
8 retary, in consultation with the Director of  
9 the Centers for Disease Control and Pre-  
10 vention and the Occupational Safety and  
11 Health Administration, as—

12 (I)(aa) involving the provision of  
13 care or treatment to individuals who  
14 had been diagnosed with COVID–19;  
15 or

16 (bb) involving the operation of a  
17 facility which provides care or treat-  
18 ment to individuals who had been di-  
19 agnosed with COVID–19; and

20 (II) having a risk of exposure to  
21 COVID–19 which is comparable to a  
22 health care provider in a hospital who  
23 is treating individuals who have been  
24 diagnosed with COVID–19.

1           (5) QUALIFIED HEALTH CARE WORKER.—The  
2       term “qualified health care worker” means an indi-  
3       vidual who—

4                   (A) provided eligible services; and

5                   (B) subject to paragraph (2)(D) of sub-  
6       section (c), has filed an application to receive a  
7       pandemic responder service award pursuant to  
8       such subsection which is approved by the Sec-  
9       retary.

10          (6) QUALIFIED PURPOSES.—The term “quali-  
11       fied purposes” means any of the following with re-  
12       spect to the qualified health care worker, their  
13       spouse, or any of their dependents:

14                   (A) Payment to the holder of—

15                           (i) a loan made, insured, or guaran-  
16                           teed under title IV of the Higher Edu-  
17                           cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070 et  
18                           seq.); or

19                           (ii) a private education loan (as de-  
20                           fined in section 140(a) of the Truth in  
21                           Lending Act (15 U.S.C. 1650(a))).

22                   (B)(i) Payment—

23                           (I) to an eligible institution for quali-  
24                           fied higher education expenses (as defined



1 in section 529(e) of the Internal Revenue  
2 Code of 1986);

3 (II) for the costs of a registered ap-  
4 prenticeship; or

5 (III) for the costs of training provided  
6 by a joint labor-management partnership.

7 (ii) In this subparagraph—

8 (I) the term “eligible institution”  
9 means—

10 (aa) an institution of higher edu-  
11 cation, as defined under section 101  
12 of the Higher Education Act of 1965  
13 (20 U.S.C. 1001), that has in effect a  
14 program participation agreement  
15 under section 487 of such Act (20  
16 U.S.C. 1094) and is eligible to partici-  
17 pate in any of the programs under  
18 title IV of such Act (20 U.S.C. 1070  
19 et seq.); and

20 (bb) a postsecondary vocational  
21 institution, as defined under section  
22 102(c) of the Higher Education Act of  
23 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(c)), that has in  
24 effect a program participation agree-  
25 ment under section 487 of such Act

1 (20 U.S.C. 1094) and is eligible to  
2 participate in any of the programs  
3 under title IV of such Act (20 U.S.C.  
4 1070 et seq.); and

5 (II) the term “registered apprentice-  
6 ship” means an apprenticeship registered  
7 under the Act of August 16, 1937 (com-  
8 monly known as the ‘National Apprentice-  
9 ship Act’; 50 Stat. 664, chapter 663; 29  
10 U.S.C. 50 et seq.), that meets any require-  
11 ment, standard, or rule promulgated under  
12 such Act as in effect on December 30,  
13 2019.

14 (C) Transfer to an eligible retirement plan,  
15 as defined in section 402(c)(8)(B) of the Inter-  
16 nal Revenue Code of 1986.

17 (D) Transfer to an ABLE account estab-  
18 lished under section 529A of the Internal Rev-  
19 enue Code of 1986.

20 (E) Transfer to the personal bank account  
21 of the individual for emergency expenses, pro-  
22 vided that the total amount transferred during  
23 any calendar year does not exceed \$1,000.

24 (F) Payment related to purchase of a prin-  
25 cipal residence by a first-time homebuyer (as

1           such terms are defined in subsection (c) of sec-  
2           tion 36 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986).

3           (G) Payment related to start-up expendi-  
4           tures (as defined in subsection (c)(1) of section  
5           195 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986).

6           (7) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means  
7           the Secretary of the Treasury or the Secretary’s del-  
8           egate.

9           (e) EXCLUSION FROM INCOME AND FEDERAL PRO-  
10          GRAMS.—

11           (1) GROSS INCOME.—For purposes of the Inter-  
12           nal Revenue Code of 1986, any payment or transfer  
13           made with respect to or on behalf of any individual  
14           under this section shall not be included in the gross  
15           income of any such individual.

16           (2) FEDERAL PROGRAMS.—The amount of any  
17           payment or transfer made with respect to or on be-  
18           half of any individual under this section shall not be  
19           taken into account as income or resources for pur-  
20           poses of determining the eligibility of such individual  
21           or any other individual for benefits or assistance, or  
22           the amount or extent of such benefits or assistance,  
23           under any Federal program or under any State or

- 1 local program financed in whole or in part with Fed-
- 2 eral funds.

