

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 7924

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to support graduate programs in mental and behavioral health professions at minority-serving institutions, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 10, 2024

Mr. BOWMAN (for himself, Mr. CÁRDENAS, Ms. GARCIA of Texas, Mr. GOLDMAN of New York, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Ms. LEE of California, Ms. LEE of Pennsylvania, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Mr. MOULTON, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Ms. NORTON, Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ, Ms. OMAR, Mrs. RAMIREZ, Mr. THANEDAR, Ms. TLAIB, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, and Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

A BILL

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to support graduate programs in mental and behavioral health professions at minority-serving institutions, 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 “Advancing Culturally
5 Competent and Equitable Supportive Services in Mental
6 Health Act” or the “ACCESS in Mental Health Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. PURPOSE.**

2 The purpose of this Act is to increase the number,
3 size, and quality of accredited graduate training programs
4 for mental and behavioral health professions at minority-
5 serving institutions to address shortages in the mental and
6 behavioral health professional workforce and diversify
7 such workforce.

8 **SEC. 3. GRANTS TO SUPPORT GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN**
9 **MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROFES-**
10 **SIONS AT HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES**
11 **AND UNIVERSITIES, TRIBAL COLLEGES AND**
12 **UNIVERSITIES, AND OTHER MINORITY-SERV-**
13 **ING INSTITUTIONS.**

14 Part A of title VII of the Higher Education Act of
15 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070) is amended—

16 (1) by redesignating subpart 5 as subpart 6;

17 (2) in section 731—

18 (A) in the section heading, by striking
19 “**SUBPARTS 1 THROUGH 4**” and inserting
20 “**SUBPARTS 1 THROUGH 5**”;

21 (B) in subsection (a), by striking “sub-
22 parts 1 through 4” and inserting “subparts 1
23 through 5”;

24 (C) in subsection (b), by striking “subparts
25 1 through 4” and inserting “subparts 1
26 through 5”; and

1 (D) in subsection (d), by striking “subpart
2 1, 2, 3, or 4” and inserting “subpart 1, 2, 3,
3 4, or 5”; and

4 (3) by inserting after subpart 4 the following:

5 **“Subpart 5—Grants To Support Graduate Programs**
6 **in Mental and Behavioral Health Professions at**
7 **Historically Black Colleges and Universities,**
8 **Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Other Mi-**
9 **nority-Serving Institutions**

10 **“SEC. 727. DEFINITIONS.**

11 “In this subpart:

12 “(1) COST OF ATTENDANCE.—The term ‘cost of
13 attendance’ has the meaning given that term in sec-
14 tion 472.

15 “(2) CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CARE.—The
16 term ‘culturally responsive care’ means care that is
17 conducted or provided in a manner that is responsive
18 to the beliefs, backgrounds, customs, interpersonal
19 styles, lived experiences, language, and behaviors of
20 individuals who are receiving the care, and in a man-
21 ner that has the greatest likelihood of ensuring max-
22 imum benefit and participation in the treatment pro-
23 vided.

24 “(3) ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION.—The term ‘eligi-
25 ble institution’ means—

1 “(A) an institution of higher education
2 that is—

3 “(i) a part B institution (as defined in
4 section 322);

5 “(ii) a Hispanic-serving institution (as
6 defined in section 502);

7 “(iii) a Tribal College or University
8 (as defined in section 316);

9 “(iv) an Alaska Native-serving institu-
10 tion (as defined in section 317(b));

11 “(v) a Native Hawaiian-serving insti-
12 tution (as defined in section 317(b));

13 “(vi) a Predominantly Black Institu-
14 tion (as defined in section 318);

15 “(vii) an Asian American and Native
16 American Pacific Islander-serving institu-
17 tion (as defined in section 320(b)); or

18 “(viii) a Native American-serving,
19 nontribal institution (as defined in section
20 319);

21 “(B) a consortium of institutions described
22 in subparagraph (A); or

23 “(C) an institution described in subpara-
24 graph (A), or a consortium described in sub-
25 paragraph (B), in partnership with any other

1 institution of higher education, but only if the
2 program supported with a grant under this sub-
3 part is carried out at an institution described in
4 subparagraph (A).

5 “(4) HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SHORTAGE
6 AREA.—The term ‘health professional shortage area’
7 means an area designated as a health professional
8 shortage area by the Administrator of the Health
9 Resources and Services Administration of the De-
10 partment of Health and Human Services.

11 “(5) MENTAL OR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PRO-
12 FESSIONAL.—The term ‘mental or behavioral health
13 professional’ means an individual with a graduate
14 degree from an institution of higher education with
15 an accredited program that prepares students for
16 State licensing or certification in fields such as psy-
17 chiatry, psychology, school psychology, behavioral pe-
18 diatrics, psychiatric nursing, social work, school so-
19 cial work, substance use disorder prevention and
20 treatment, marriage and family counseling, school
21 counseling, professional counseling, child and adoles-
22 cent psychiatry, or any other provider that is a State
23 licensed or certified mental health professional quali-
24 fied under State law to provide mental health serv-
25 ices.

1 “(6) SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERV-
2 ICES PROVIDER.—The term ‘school-based mental
3 health services provider’ has the meaning given the
4 term in section 4102 of the Elementary and Sec-
5 ondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7112).

6 “(7) TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE.—The term
7 ‘trauma-informed care’ means care received by indi-
8 viduals who have experienced or witnessed trauma
9 that is healing-centered and culturally responsive in
10 accordance with professional standards of practice
11 and accounting for patients’ experiences and that
12 recognizes the emotional, behavioral, and develop-
13 mental challenges that can accompany trauma expo-
14 sure in order to eliminate or mitigate triggers that
15 may cause re-traumatization of the patient.

16 **“SEC. 728. GRANTS TO INSTITUTIONS FOR GRADUATE**
17 **TRAINING PROGRAMS IN MENTAL OR BEHAV-**
18 **IORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONS.**

19 “(a) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—From amounts made
20 available to carry out this section for each fiscal year and
21 not reserved under subsection (b), the Secretary is author-
22 ized to award grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible
23 institutions—

24 “(1) to establish, expand, or improve graduate
25 programs in mental and behavioral health profes-

1 sions, including programs that train school-based
2 mental service providers; or

3 “(2) to engage in planning activities necessary
4 for the establishment of new graduate programs in
5 mental and behavioral health professions, including
6 programs that train school-based mental health serv-
7 ice providers.

8 “(b) RESERVATION.—The Secretary may reserve not
9 more than two percent of the funds made available to
10 carry out this section for a fiscal year to provide technical
11 assistance to eligible institutions on matters relating to the
12 grant program under this section and the implementation
13 of programs supported by such grants.

14 “(c) USE OF FUNDS.—

15 “(1) REQUIRED USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible
16 institution that receives a grant under subsection
17 (a)(1) shall use at least five percent of grant funds
18 to award scholarships or stipends, based on financial
19 need, to cover all or part of a student’s cost of at-
20 tendance for the mental or behavioral health grad-
21 uate program. Scholarships and stipends awarded
22 under this subsection shall prioritize students who
23 are from health professional shortage areas.

24 “(2) ALLOWABLE USE OF FUNDS.—After ful-
25 filling the requirement in paragraph (1), an eligible

1 institution that receives a grant under subsection
2 (a)(1) shall use any remaining grant funds to carry
3 out one or more of the following activities:

4 “(A) Establish new accredited graduate
5 programs that prepare students for State li-
6 censing and certification to serve as mental or
7 behavioral health professionals or school-based
8 mental health services providers, including
9 through hiring and compensating faculty, pur-
10 chasing or developing culturally responsive
11 course materials, or other activities necessary to
12 establish such programs.

13 “(B) Ensure that graduate programs in
14 mental or behavioral health professions offered
15 by the institution are preparing professionals
16 who are highly qualified, are able to provide
17 culturally responsive and trauma-informed be-
18 havioral health care, and are equipped to serve
19 in health professional shortage areas or other
20 high-need areas or schools, which may in-
21 clude—

22 “(i) recruiting, training, retraining, or
23 retaining faculty for such programs;

24 “(ii) designing or redesigning such
25 programs—

1 “(I) to prepare mental or behav-
2 ioral health professionals to serve in
3 health professional shortage areas or
4 other high-need areas or schools, pro-
5 vide culturally responsive and trauma-
6 informed care to diverse patients, and
7 meet the needs of the whole child or
8 person;

9 “(II) to incorporate rigorous aca-
10 demic content and scientifically valid
11 research; and

12 “(III) to adequately prepare stu-
13 dents to meet State licensure and cer-
14 tification standards; and

15 “(iii) developing or implementing high
16 quality course materials, which may in-
17 clude purchasing necessary educational
18 materials or other academic resources, to
19 support the design or redesign of the pro-
20 gram as described in clause (ii).

21 “(C) Provide students with sustained and
22 high-quality preservice and clinical experience
23 that is aligned with graduate education stand-
24 ards for their respective fields, which may in-
25 clude—

1 “(i) arranging for exemplary mental
2 or behavioral health professionals in rel-
3 evant fields or work settings to mentor stu-
4 dents who are prospective mental or behav-
5 ioral health professionals; or

6 “(ii) substantially increasing the level
7 of interaction between faculty at institu-
8 tions of higher education and new and ex-
9 perienced mental and behavioral health
10 professionals, and providing support, in-
11 cluding preparation time, for such inter-
12 actions.

13 “(D) Establish partnerships with other in-
14 stitutions of higher education with accredited
15 programs that prepare students for State li-
16 censing or certification in mental or behavioral
17 health fields to allow cross registration or other
18 forms of program collaboration determined eli-
19 gible by the Secretary for the purposes of ex-
20 panding access to classes, certificate programs,
21 or degree programs in mental or behavioral
22 health fields for students from racial or ethnic
23 minority communities.

24 “(E) Develop and implement supportive
25 services for former students of the institution

1 who work as mental or behavioral health profes-
2 sionals or partnerships with school districts,
3 State or local agencies, or other places of em-
4 ployment for former students to promote reten-
5 tion in those professions, including services
6 such as—

7 “(i) mental or behavioral health pro-
8 fessional mentoring from exemplary mental
9 or behavioral health professionals in rel-
10 evant fields or work settings, including
11 those working in schools or home-based
12 care settings;

13 “(ii) materials, resources, and support
14 for mental or behavioral health profes-
15 sionals during their first three years of em-
16 ployment in such profession; or

17 “(iii) services to prevent or mitigate
18 secondary trauma or burnout associated
19 with working in mental health professional
20 shortage areas or other high-need areas or
21 schools.

22 “(F) Disseminate information on effective
23 practices for the preparation of mental or be-
24 havioral health professionals, including prac-
25 tices for obtaining any certifications or licenses

1 needed to practice as a mental or behavioral
2 health professional or a school mental health
3 services provider in a State.

4 “(G) Develop strategies to increase aware-
5 ness, interest, and experiential learning oppor-
6 tunities in mental and behavioral health ca-
7 reers, especially among racial and ethnic minor-
8 ity communities, including through partnerships
9 with State educational agencies, local edu-
10 cational agencies, or other institutions of higher
11 education to increase awareness of and interest
12 in such careers among elementary school stu-
13 dents, secondary school students, or under-
14 graduate students.

15 “(3) PLANNING GRANTS.—An eligible institu-
16 tion that receives a grant under subsection (a)(2)
17 shall use the grant to engage in planning activities
18 necessary for the establishment of at least one new
19 graduate program in mental or behavioral health
20 professions.

21 “(d) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive a grant
22 under this section, an eligible institution shall submit an
23 application to the Secretary at such time, in such manner,
24 and containing such information as the Secretary may re-
25 quire. An eligible institution applying for a grant under

1 subsection (a)(2) shall include in the institution’s applica-
2 tion for such grant information demonstrating evidence
3 of—

4 “(1) an institutional commitment to opening
5 and sustaining a graduate program that prepares
6 students to work as a mental or behavioral health
7 professional; and

8 “(2) a relationship with the relevant profes-
9 sional organization, accreditation agency or associa-
10 tion, or regulatory body to ensure that planning
11 aligns with professional standards and State
12 credentialing requirements.

13 “(e) GRANT AMOUNT.—

14 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The minimum amount of
15 each grant under subsection (a)(1) shall be
16 \$500,000.

17 “(2) PLANNING GRANTS.—The amount of each
18 grant under subsection (a)(2) shall be an amount
19 determined by the Secretary.

20 “(f) LIMITATION ON ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—

21 An eligible institution that receives a grant under this sec-
22 tion may use not more than three percent of funds pro-
23 vided to administer the grant, not including salary and
24 benefits for faculty and staff.

1 “(g) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary shall prescribe
2 such regulations as may be necessary to carry out this
3 section.

4 “(h) REPORT.—Not later than two years after the
5 date of the enactment of this section, and not less fre-
6 quently than once every two years thereafter, the Sec-
7 retary shall submit to the authorizing committees a report
8 on the grant program under this section. Each report shall
9 include—

10 “(1) descriptions of the programs supported
11 with grants under this section;

12 “(2) demographic information about the stu-
13 dents served by such programs; and

14 “(3) such other information as the Secretary
15 determines appropriate.

16 “(i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
17 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
18 such sums as may be necessary for each fiscal year.

19 **“SEC. 729. GRANTS TO STUDENTS FOR GRADUATE STUDY IN**
20 **MENTAL OR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROFES-**
21 **SIONS.**

22 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary is authorized to
23 carry out a program under which the Secretary shall pay
24 to an eligible institution such sums as may be necessary
25 to enable the institution to provide each eligible student

1 with a grant in the amount of \$10,000 for each year dur-
2 ing which the student attends an eligible graduate pro-
3 gram at the institution.

4 “(b) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive a grant
5 under this section, a student shall submit to the institution
6 an application at such time, in such manner, and con-
7 taining such information as the Secretary, in consultation
8 with the institution, may require.

9 “(c) DISTRIBUTION TO STUDENTS.—Subject to sub-
10 section (d), grants to students under this section shall be
11 made in accordance with a process determined by the Sec-
12 retary for such purpose, in such manner as will best ac-
13 complish the purpose of this section.

14 “(d) LIMITATION ON SECRETARIAL AND INSTITU-
15 TIONAL AUTHORITY.—In carrying out the grant program
16 under this section, the Secretary and any institution par-
17 ticipating in the program may not—

18 “(1) convert a grant into a loan or otherwise
19 require a student to repay any portion of the grant
20 amount; or

21 “(2) require a student to complete a service ob-
22 ligation as a condition of receiving such a grant.

23 “(e) REPORT.—Not later than two years after the
24 date of the enactment of this section, and not less fre-
25 quently than once every two years thereafter, the Sec-

1 retary shall submit to the authorizing committees a report
2 on the grant program under this section. Each report shall
3 include information on the following:

4 “(1) The number and demographic information
5 of students who received grants under this section.

6 “(2) The degrees obtained by such recipients.

7 “(3) Such other information as the Secretary
8 determines appropriate.

9 “(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

10 “(1) ELIGIBLE GRADUATE PROGRAM.—The
11 term ‘eligible graduate program’ means a graduate
12 degree program in a mental or behavioral health
13 profession, including school-based mental health
14 services, offered by an eligible institution.

15 “(2) ELIGIBLE STUDENT.—The term ‘eligible
16 student ’ means a student who—

17 “(A) is enrolled in an eligible graduate
18 program at a eligible institution participating in
19 the program under this section;

20 “(B) is in good academic standing, as de-
21 termined by the institution; and

22 “(C) has submitted an application to the
23 institution in accordance with subsection (b).

1 “(g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
2 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
3 such sums as may be necessary for each fiscal year.”.

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