

117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 5937

To increase language access to mental health services at certain health centers, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 9, 2021

Ms. MENG (for herself, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Ms. NORTON, Mr. NADLER, Ms. BASS, Ms. LEE of California, Mr. TAKANO, Ms. GARCIA of Texas, Mr. MFUME, Mr. MOULTON, Mr. LIEU, Ms. BARRAGÁN, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Mr. SIRES, Mr. RASKIN, Mrs. FLETCHER, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Mr. TRONE, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Ms. MATSUI, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, and Ms. CHU) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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## A BILL

To increase language access to mental health services at certain health centers, 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 “Mental Health Work-  
5 force and Language Access Act of 2021”.

1 **SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM TO INCREASE LANGUAGE ACCESS**  
2 **AT FEDERALLY QUALIFIED HEALTH CEN-**  
3 **TERS.**

4 (a) LOAN REPAYMENTS TO QUALIFIED HEALTH  
5 CARE PROFESSIONALS.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—For the purpose of increas-  
7 ing language access to mental health services, the  
8 Secretary shall carry out a demonstration project  
9 under which—

10 (A) the Secretary matches qualified mental  
11 health professionals with Federally qualified  
12 health centers;

13 (B) the qualified mental health profes-  
14 sionals each agree to a period of obligated serv-  
15 ice at a Federally qualified health center with  
16 which they are so matched; and

17 (C) the Secretary agrees to make loan re-  
18 payments under section 338B of the Public  
19 Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 2541–1) on be-  
20 half of such qualified mental health profes-  
21 sionals.

22 (2) PREFERENCE.—In matching qualified men-  
23 tal health professionals with Federally qualified  
24 health centers under paragraph (1), the Secretary  
25 shall give preference to placement at Federally quali-  
26 fied health centers at which at least 20 percent of

1 the patients are best served in a language other than  
2 English, as indicated by data in the Uniform Data  
3 System (or any successor database).

4 (3) ENHANCED COMPENSATION.—For each  
5 year of obligated service that a qualified mental  
6 health professional contracts to serve under para-  
7 graph (1) at a Federally qualified health center at  
8 which at least 20 percent of the patients are best  
9 served in a language other than English, as indi-  
10 cated by data in the Uniform Data System (or any  
11 successor database), the Secretary may pay the  
12 higher of—

13 (A) \$10,000 above the maximum amount  
14 otherwise applicable under section  
15 338B(g)(2)(A) of the Public Health Service Act  
16 (42 U.S.C. 254l–1(g)(2)(A)); or

17 (B) if the qualified health professional is  
18 fluent in a language other than English that is  
19 needed by such Federally qualified health cen-  
20 ter, \$15,000 above such maximum amount.

21 (4) ACHIEVING FLUENCY.—A qualified mental  
22 health professional subject to the pay amount speci-  
23 fied in paragraph (3)(A) at the beginning of the pro-  
24 fessional’s period of obligated service may transition  
25 to being subject to the higher pay amount specified

1 in paragraph (3)(B) if the professional is determined  
2 by the Federally qualified health center at which the  
3 professional serves to have achieved fluency in a lan-  
4 guage other than English needed by that health cen-  
5 ter.

6 (b) GRANTS TO HEALTH CENTERS.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry  
8 out a demonstration program consisting of awarding  
9 grants under section 330 of the Public Health Serv-  
10 ice Act (42 U.S.C. 254b) to Federally qualified  
11 health centers to recruit, hire, employ, and supervise  
12 qualified mental health professionals who are fluent  
13 in a language other than English to provide mental  
14 health services in such other language.

15 (2) PREFERENCE.—In selecting grant recipi-  
16 ents under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall give  
17 preference to Federally qualified health centers at  
18 which at least 20 percent of the patients are best  
19 served in a language other than English, as indi-  
20 cated by data in the Uniform Data System (or any  
21 successor database).

22 (3) MARKETING.—A Federally qualified health  
23 center receiving a grant under this subsection shall  
24 use a portion of the grant funds to disseminate in-

1 formation about, and otherwise market, the mental  
2 health services supported through the grant.

3 (c) REPORTS.—

4 (1) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than 6 months  
5 after the first loan repayment awards have been  
6 made under subsection (a) and the first grants have  
7 been awarded under subsection (b), the Secretary  
8 shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of  
9 the House of Representatives and the Senate, and to  
10 other appropriate congressional committees, a report  
11 on the implementation of the programs under this  
12 section. Such report shall include—

13 (A) the languages spoken by the qualified  
14 mental health professionals receiving loan re-  
15 payments pursuant to subsection (a) or re-  
16 cruited pursuant to a grant under subsection  
17 (b);

18 (B) the Federally qualified health centers  
19 at which such professionals were placed;

20 (C) how many Federally qualified health  
21 centers received funding through the grant pro-  
22 gram under subsection (b);

23 (D) an analysis, conducted in consultation  
24 with the Federally qualified health centers re-  
25 ceiving grants under section (b), of the effec-

1           tiveness of such grants at increasing language  
2           access to mental health services; and

3           (E) best practices, developed in consulta-  
4           tion with Federally qualified health centers re-  
5           ceiving grants under section (b), for the recruit-  
6           ment and retention of mental health profes-  
7           sionals at Federally qualified health centers.

8           (2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than the end of  
9           fiscal year 2026, the Secretary shall submit to the  
10          Committees on Appropriations of the House of Rep-  
11          resentatives and the Senate, and to other appro-  
12          priate congressional committees, a final report on  
13          the implementation of the programs under this sec-  
14          tion, including the information, analysis, and best  
15          practices listed in subparagraphs (A) through (E) of  
16          paragraph (1).

17          (d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

18           (1) The term “Federally qualified health cen-  
19           ter” has the meaning given the term in section  
20           1861(aa) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C.  
21           1395x(aa)).

22           (2) The term “qualified mental health profes-  
23           sional” means—

24           (A) physicians, allopathic physicians, osteo-  
25           pathic physicians, nurse practitioners, and phy-

1           sician assistants with a specialty in mental  
2           health and psychiatry;

3           (B) health service psychologists;

4           (C) licensed clinical social workers;

5           (D) psychiatric nurse specialists;

6           (E) marriage and family therapists;

7           (F) licensed professional counselors;

8           (G) substance use disorder counselors;

9           (H) occupational therapists; and

10          (I) other individuals who—

11                 (i) have not yet been licensed or cer-  
12                 tified to serve as a professional listed in  
13                 any of subparagraphs (A) through (H);  
14                 and

15                 (ii) will serve at the Federally quali-  
16                 fied health center under the supervision of  
17                 a licensed individual or certified profes-  
18                 sional so listed.

19           (3) The term “Secretary” means the Secretary  
20           of Health and Human Services.

21           (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

22                 (1) IN GENERAL.—To carry out this section,  
23                 there is authorized to be appropriated \$75,000,000  
24                 for each of fiscal years 2022 through 2026.

1           (2) SUPPLEMENT NOT SUPPLANT.—Amounts  
2           made available to carry out this section shall be in  
3           addition to amounts otherwise available to provide  
4           mental health services at Federally qualified health  
5           centers pursuant to sections 338B and 330 of the  
6           Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254l–1, 254b).

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