

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. _____

To establish the Mental Health Excellence in Schools Program to increase the recruitment and retention of school-based mental health services providers, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. PETERS (for Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself, Mr. YOUNG, Mr. PETERS, and Mr. CRAMER)) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To establish the Mental Health Excellence in Schools Program to increase the recruitment and retention of school-based mental health services providers, 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 Excel-
5 lence in Schools Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. PROGRAM TO ESTABLISH PUBLIC-PRIVATE CON-**
2 **TRIBUTIONS TO INCREASE THE AVAILABLE**
3 **WORKFORCE OF SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL**
4 **HEALTH SERVICE PROVIDERS.**

5 (a) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary shall
6 carry out a program under which eligible graduate institu-
7 tions may enter into an agreement with the Secretary to
8 cover a portion of the cost of attendance of a participating
9 student, which contributions shall be matched by equiva-
10 lent contributions towards such cost of attendance by the
11 Secretary.

12 (b) DESIGNATION OF PROGRAM.—The program
13 under this section shall be known as the “Mental Health
14 Excellence in Schools Program”.

15 (c) AGREEMENTS.—The Secretary shall enter into an
16 agreement with each eligible graduate institution seeking
17 to participate in the program under this section. Each
18 agreement shall specify the following:

19 (1) The manner (whether by direct grant, schol-
20 arship, or otherwise) in which the eligible graduate
21 institution will contribute to the cost of attendance
22 of a participating student.

23 (2) The maximum amount of the contribution
24 to be made by the eligible graduate institution with
25 respect to any particular participating student in
26 any given academic year.

1 (3) The maximum number of individuals for
2 whom the eligible graduate institution will make con-
3 tributions in any given academic year.

4 (4) That the eligible graduate institution, in se-
5 lecting participating students to receive assistance
6 under the program, shall prioritize the participating
7 students described in subsection (d)(2).

8 (5) Such other matters as the Secretary and
9 the eligible graduate institution determine appro-
10 priate.

11 (d) OUTREACH.—The Secretary shall—

12 (1) make publicly available and periodically up-
13 date on the internet website of the Department of
14 Education a list of the eligible graduate institutions
15 participating in the program under this section that
16 shall specify, for each such graduate institution, ap-
17 propriate information on the agreement between the
18 Secretary and such eligible graduate institution
19 under subsection (c); and

20 (2) conduct outreach about the program under
21 this section to participating students who, as under-
22 graduates—

23 (A) received a Federal Pell Grant under
24 section 401 of the Higher Education Act of
25 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070a); or

1 (B) attended an institution listed in section
2 371(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965
3 (20 U.S.C. 1067q(a)).

4 (e) MATCHING CONTRIBUTIONS.—The Secretary may
5 provide a contribution of up to 50 percent of the cost of
6 attendance of a participating student if the eligible grad-
7 uate institution at which such student is enrolled enters
8 into an agreement under subsection (c) with the Secretary
9 to match such contribution.

10 (f) MONITORING AND EVALUATION.—As a condition
11 of participation in the program under this section, each
12 eligible graduate institution shall agree to submit an an-
13 nual report to the Secretary describing—

14 (1) the number of students served by the pro-
15 gram;

16 (2) the percentage of tuition cost covered by the
17 program;

18 (3) the number of participating students who
19 were also recipients of a Federal Pell grant; and

20 (4) as applicable, the graduation rates and
21 post-graduate employment of participating students.

22 (g) INTERIM REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after
23 the first contributions are provided under this section, the
24 Secretary shall submit an interim report to Congress
25 based on the annual reports required by subsection (f).

1 (h) INDEPENDENT NATIONAL EVALUATION.—

2 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 4 years after
3 the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary
4 shall provide for the commencement of an inde-
5 pendent national evaluation of the outcomes and ef-
6 fectiveness of the program under this section.

7 (2) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 90
8 days after receiving the results of such independent
9 national evaluation, the Secretary shall submit a re-
10 port to Congress containing the findings of the eval-
11 uation and the Secretary’s recommendations for im-
12 provements to the program.

13 (i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
14 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act—

15 (1) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2023;

16 (2) \$30,000,000 for fiscal year 2024; and

17 (3) \$50,000,000 each of the fiscal years 2025
18 through 2027.

19 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

20 In this Act:

21 (1) COST OF ATTENDANCE.—The term “cost of
22 attendance” has the meaning given the term in sec-
23 tion 472 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20
24 U.S.C. 1087ll).

1 (2) ELIGIBLE GRADUATE INSTITUTION.—The
2 term “eligible graduate institution” means an insti-
3 tution of higher education that offers a program of
4 study that leads to a graduate degree—

5 (A) in school psychology that is accredited
6 or approved by the National Association of
7 School Psychologists’ Program Accreditation
8 Board or the Commission on Accreditation of
9 the American Psychological Association and
10 that prepares students in such program for the
11 State licensing or certification examination in
12 school psychology at the specialist level;

13 (B) in an accredited school counseling pro-
14 gram that prepares students in such program
15 for the State licensing or certification examina-
16 tion in school counseling;

17 (C) in school social work that is accredited
18 by the Council on Social Work Education and
19 that prepares students in such program for the
20 State licensing or certification examination in
21 school social work;

22 (D) in another school-based mental health
23 field that prepares students in such program
24 for the State licensing or certification examina-
25 tion in such field, if applicable; or

1 (E) in any combination of study described
2 in subparagraphs (A) through (D).

3 (3) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The
4 term “institution of higher education” has the
5 meaning given such term in section 101 of the High-
6 er Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

7 (4) PARTICIPATING STUDENT.—The term “par-
8 ticipating student” means an individual who is en-
9 rolled in a graduate degree program in a school-
10 based mental health field at a participating eligible
11 graduate institution.

12 (5) SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH FIELD.—
13 The term “school-based mental health field” means
14 each of the following fields:

15 (A) School counseling.

16 (B) School social work.

17 (C) School psychology.

18 (D) Any other field of study that leads to
19 employment as a school-based mental health
20 services provider, as determined by the Sec-
21 retary.

22 (6) SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
23 PROVIDER.—The term “school-based mental health
24 services provider” has the meaning given the term in

1 section 4102 of the Elementary and Secondary Edu-
2 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7112).

3 (7) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
4 the Secretary of Education.