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(Original Signature of Member)

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

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

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. MENG introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee
on _____

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).