

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8069

To amend the Public Health Service Act to encourage qualified individuals to enter the forensic pathology workforce, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 18, 2024

Mr. GUEST (for himself and Mr. CLEAVER) 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 subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To amend the Public Health Service Act to encourage qualified individuals to enter the forensic pathology workforce, 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 “Strengthening the
5 Medical Examiner and Coroner System Act of 2024”.

1 **SEC. 2. FORENSIC MEDICAL NEEDS.**

2 Part E of title VII of the Public Health Service Act
3 (42 U.S.C. 294n et seq.) is amended by adding at the end
4 the following:

5 **“Subpart 4—Forensic Pathology Workforce**

6 **“SEC. 779. GRANTS TO ADDRESS THE FORENSIC MEDICINE**
7 **SERVICE PROVIDER SHORTAGE.**

8 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

9 “(1) FORENSIC MEDICINE SERVICE PRO-
10 VIDER.—The term ‘forensic medicine service pro-
11 vider’ has the meaning given the term in section 6
12 of Billy’s Law (34 U.S.C. 40506 note; Public Law
13 117–327).

14 “(2) MEDICOLEGAL DEATH INVESTIGATOR.—
15 The term ‘medicolegal death investigator’ means an
16 individual who performs formal inquiry into the cir-
17 cumstances surrounding the death of a human being
18 to assist in the determination of the cause and man-
19 ner of death.

20 “(3) SECRETARY.—The term ‘Secretary’ means
21 the Secretary, acting through the Collaborating Of-
22 fice of Medical Examiners and Coroners of the Cen-
23 ters for Disease Control and Prevention.

24 “(b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this section are—

25 “(1) to encourage and incentivize qualified med-
26 ical school graduates to enter the practice of forensic

1 pathology by supporting forensic pathology fellow-
2 ships;

3 “(2) to encourage and incentivize qualified indi-
4 viduals to enter the field of medicolegal death inves-
5 tigation to conduct death investigations in support
6 of forensic medicine service providers; and

7 “(3) to support qualified individuals who enter
8 the field of forensic toxicology through employment
9 in forensic toxicology laboratories in the acquisition
10 of skills in pharmacology, advanced and emerging
11 toxicological methods, and instrumentation needed to
12 assist with the interpretation of toxicological find-
13 ings.

14 “(c) GRANTS.—The Secretary shall award grants to
15 eligible entities described in subsection (d) to assist such
16 entities in addressing their shortages by offering the train-
17 ing and fellowships described in subsection (e)(1).

18 “(d) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible to receive a grant
19 under this section, an entity shall be—

20 “(1) a graduate medical education program—

21 “(A) accredited by the Accreditation Coun-
22 cil for Graduate Medical Education that offers
23 a forensic pathology fellowship that is so ac-
24 credited; or

1 “(B) that is seeking such accreditation for
2 a forensic pathology fellowship;

3 “(2) a publicly funded medical examiner or cor-
4 oner office that is accredited or seeking accredita-
5 tion; or

6 “(3) a publicly funded forensic toxicology lab-
7 oratory that supports medical examiner and coroner
8 offices and that is accredited or seeking accredita-
9 tion.

10 “(e) USE OF GRANT FUNDS.—

11 “(1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity that re-
12 ceives a grant under this section shall use the grant
13 funds—

14 “(A) to provide payment to individuals se-
15 lected by such entity for a forensic pathology
16 fellowship for salary, fringe benefits, related
17 supply expenses, and other educational expenses
18 of such individuals;

19 “(B) provide training for medicolegal death
20 investigators, including paying for the costs of
21 continuing education for medicolegal death in-
22 vestigators for purposes of such individuals—

23 “(i) becoming certified by the Amer-
24 ican Board of Medicolegal Death Investiga-

1 tion (or another accredited certifying orga-
2 nization); and

3 “(ii) maintaining such certification; or
4 “(C) to assist eligible entities—

5 “(i) in providing the education and
6 training to individuals employed by such
7 entities necessary—

8 “(I) to gain initial competency,
9 additional training, and continuing
10 education in pharmacology and ad-
11 vanced and emerging toxicological
12 methods and instrumentation needed
13 to assist with the interpretation of
14 toxicological findings;

15 “(II) to become certified by the
16 American Board of Forensic Toxi-
17 cology, the American Association of
18 Clinical Chemistry, or another accred-
19 ited certifying organization; or

20 “(III) to maintain such certifi-
21 cation or to obtain recertification by
22 such a certifying organization; or

23 “(ii) in obtaining accreditation by the
24 Accreditation Council for Graduate Med-

1 ical Education for forensic pathology fel-
2 lowships.

3 “(2) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—An eligible enti-
4 ty that receives a grant under this section may use
5 not more than 15 percent of the total amount of the
6 grant for administrative expenses, including grant
7 management services.

8 “(f) RECIPIENT REQUIREMENTS.—To be eligible to
9 receive a fellowship funded by a grant under this section,
10 an individual shall—

11 “(1)(A) be enrolled in, or shall have completed,
12 an anatomical pathology or anatomical and clinical
13 pathology residency program accredited by the Ac-
14 creditation Council for Graduate Medical Education;
15 and

16 “(B) not be, and shall never have been, in de-
17 fault on any public or private student loan;

18 “(2)(A) be an individual who has completed a
19 program of baccalaureate or postbaccalaureate edu-
20 cation and earned a degree, or completed a con-
21 centration, in forensic science, natural science, an-
22 thropology, nursing, or other medical and forensic-
23 related fields; and

24 “(B) be a coroner or medicolegal death investi-
25 gator working full-time at, or in a contractual rela-

1 tionship with, a publicly funded medical examiner or
2 coroner office who—

3 “(i) has not achieved, and is seeking, cer-
4 tification by an accredited certification organi-
5 zation described in subsection (e)(1)(B)(i); or

6 “(ii) who is seeking continuing education
7 for purposes of maintaining such certification;

8 “(3)(A) have completed a program of bacca-
9 laureate or postbaccalaureate education and earned
10 a degree, or completed a concentration, in forensic
11 science or physical or natural sciences, with a chem-
12 istry, toxicology, or other closely related scientific or
13 forensic component; and

14 “(B) be employed by the eligible entity as a tox-
15 icologist or pharmacologist.

16 “(g) TAX WAIVER.—The payment amounts to an in-
17 dividual under this section or any other benefit received
18 by the individual from the grant recipient shall not be tax-
19 able to the individual.

20 “(h) GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION.—In awarding
21 grants under this section, the Secretary shall take into
22 consideration—

23 “(1) the geographic distribution of grant fund-
24 ing among the States;

1 “(2) the relative proportion of grant funding
2 between rural and urban areas; and

3 “(3) the unique needs of rural communities, in-
4 cluding—

5 “(A) communities with an incidence of in-
6 dividuals with opioid use disorder that is above
7 the national average; and

8 “(B) communities with a shortage of fo-
9 rensic medicine service providers.

10 “(i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

11 “(1) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be
12 appropriated to the Secretary to carry out this sec-
13 tion \$13,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2025
14 through 2029.

15 “(2) ALLOCATIONS.—Of the amounts made
16 available each fiscal year under paragraph (1), the
17 Secretary shall allocate—

18 “(A) subject to paragraph (3), not less
19 than \$7,000,000 for grants to eligible entities
20 carrying out the purpose described in sub-
21 section (e)(1)(A);

22 “(B) not less than \$3,000,000 for grants
23 to eligible entities carrying out the purpose de-
24 scribed in subsection (e)(1)(B); and

1 “(C) not less than \$3,000,000 for grants
2 to eligible entities carrying out the purpose de-
3 scribed in subsection (e)(1)(C).

4 “(3) FELLOWSHIP MINIMUM.—In allocating
5 amounts for grants to eligible entities carrying out
6 the purpose described in subsection (e)(1)(A), the
7 Secretary shall award sufficient grant funding to
8 such entities to ensure that not fewer than 40 foren-
9 sic pathology fellowships are funded.”.

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