

115TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 3262

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## AN ACT

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to provide educational assistance to certain former members of the Armed Forces for education and training as physician assistants of the Department of Veterans Affairs, 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Grow Our Own Direc-  
3 tive: Physician Assistant Employment and Education Act  
4 of 2017”.

5 **SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL AS-**  
6 **SISTANCE TO PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS TO BE**  
7 **EMPLOYED AT THE DEPARTMENT OF VET-**  
8 **ERANS AFFAIRS.**

9 (a) PILOT PROGRAM.—

10 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans  
11 Affairs shall carry out a pilot program to be known  
12 as the “Grow Our Own Directive” or “G.O.O.D.”  
13 pilot program (in this section referred to as the  
14 “pilot program”) to provide educational assistance  
15 to certain former members of the Armed Forces for  
16 education and training as physician assistants of the  
17 Department of Veterans Affairs.

18 (2) INFORMATION ON PILOT PROGRAM.—The  
19 Secretary shall provide information on the pilot pro-  
20 gram to eligible individuals under subsection (b), in-  
21 cluding information on application requirements and  
22 a list of entities with which the Secretary has  
23 partnered under subsection (g).

24 (b) ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS.—An individual is eligi-  
25 ble to participate in the pilot program if the individual—

1           (1) has medical or military health experience  
2           gained while serving as a member of the Armed  
3           Forces;

4           (2) has received a certificate, associate degree,  
5           baccalaureate degree, master's degree, or  
6           postbaccalaureate training in a science relating to  
7           health care;

8           (3) is not eligible to participate in educational  
9           assistance under chapter 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, or 35  
10          of title 38, United States Code, or chapter 1606 or  
11          1607 of title 10, United States Code;

12          (4) has participated in the delivery of health  
13          care services or related medical services, including  
14          participation in military training relating to the  
15          identification, evaluation, treatment, and prevention  
16          of diseases and disorders; and

17          (5) does not have a degree of doctor of medi-  
18          cine, doctor of osteopathy, or doctor of dentistry.

19          (c) DURATION.—The pilot program shall be carried  
20          out during the 5-year period beginning on the date that  
21          is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

22          (d) SELECTION.—

23                 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall select  
24                 not less than 250 eligible individuals under sub-  
25                 section (b) to participate in the pilot program.

1           (2) PRIORITY FOR SELECTION.—In selecting in-  
2           dividuals to participate in the pilot program under  
3           paragraph (1), the Secretary shall give priority to  
4           the following individuals:

5                   (A) Individuals who participated in the In-  
6                   termediate Care Technician Pilot Program of  
7                   the Department that was carried out by the  
8                   Secretary between January 2011 and February  
9                   2015.

10                   (B) Individuals who agree to be employed  
11                   as a physician assistant for the Veterans Health  
12                   Administration at a medical facility of the De-  
13                   partment located in a community that—

14                           (i) is designated as a medically under-  
15                           served population under section  
16                           330(b)(3)(A) of the Public Health Service  
17                           Act (42 U.S.C. 254b(b)(3)(A)); and

18                           (ii) is in a State with a per capita  
19                           population of veterans of more than 9 per-  
20                           cent according to the National Center for  
21                           Veterans Analysis and Statistics and the  
22                           United States Census Bureau.

23           (e) EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.—

24                   (1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the pilot  
25                   program, the Secretary shall provide educational as-

1       sistance to individuals participating in the pilot pro-  
2       gram, including through the use of scholarships, to  
3       cover the costs to such individuals of obtaining a  
4       master's degree in physician assistant studies or a  
5       similar master's degree.

6               (2) USE OF EXISTING PROGRAMS.—In pro-  
7       viding educational assistance under paragraph (1),  
8       the Secretary shall use the Department of Veterans  
9       Affairs Health Professionals Educational Assistance  
10      Program under chapter 76 of title 38, United States  
11      Code, and such other educational assistance pro-  
12      grams of the Department as the Secretary considers  
13      appropriate.

14              (3) USE OF SCHOLARSHIPS.—The Secretary  
15      shall provide not less than 35 scholarships under the  
16      pilot program to individuals participating in the pilot  
17      program during each year in which the pilot pro-  
18      gram is carried out.

19      (f) PERIOD OF OBLIGATED SERVICE.—

20              (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall enter  
21      into an agreement with each individual participating  
22      in the pilot program in which such individual agrees  
23      to be employed as a physician assistant for the Vet-  
24      erans Health Administration for a period of obli-  
25      gated service specified in paragraph (2).

1           (2) PERIOD SPECIFIED.—With respect to each  
2 individual participating in the pilot program, the pe-  
3 riod of obligated service specified in this paragraph  
4 for the individual is—

5           (A) if the individual is participating in the  
6 pilot program through a program described in  
7 subsection (e)(2) that specifies a period of obli-  
8 gated service, the period specified with respect  
9 to such program; or

10          (B) if the individual is participating in the  
11 pilot program other than through a program  
12 described in such subsection, or if such program  
13 does not specify a period of obligated service, a  
14 period of three years or such other period as  
15 the Secretary considers appropriate for pur-  
16 poses of the pilot program.

17 (g) BREACH.—

18          (1) LIABILITY.—Except as provided in para-  
19 graph (2), an individual who participates in the pilot  
20 program and fails to satisfy the period of obligated  
21 service under subsection (f) shall be liable to the  
22 United States, in lieu of such obligated service, for  
23 the amount that has been paid or is payable to or  
24 on behalf of the individual under the pilot program,  
25 reduced by the proportion that the number of days

1 served for completion of the period of obligated serv-  
2 ice bears to the total number of days in the period  
3 of obligated service of such individual.

4 (2) EXCEPTION.—If an individual is partici-  
5 pating in the pilot program through a program de-  
6 scribed in subsection (e)(2) that specifies a period of  
7 obligated service, the liability of the individual for  
8 failing to satisfy the period of obligated service  
9 under subsection (f) shall be determined as specified  
10 with respect to such program.

11 (h) MENTORS.—The Secretary shall ensure that a  
12 physician assistant mentor or mentors are available for in-  
13 dividuals participating in the pilot program at each facility  
14 of the Veterans Health Administration at which a partici-  
15 pant in the pilot program is employed.

16 (i) PARTNERSHIPS.—In carrying out the pilot pro-  
17 gram, the Secretary shall seek to partner with the fol-  
18 lowing:

19 (1) Not less than 15 institutions of higher edu-  
20 cation that—

21 (A) offer a master's degree program in  
22 physician assistant studies or a similar area of  
23 study that is accredited by the Accreditation  
24 Review Commission on Education for the Phy-  
25 sician Assistant; and

1 (B) agree—

2 (i) to guarantee seats in such master's  
3 degree program for individuals partici-  
4 pating in the pilot program who meet the  
5 entrance requirements for such master's  
6 degree program; and

7 (ii) to provide individuals partici-  
8 pating in the pilot program with informa-  
9 tion on admissions criteria and the admis-  
10 sions process.

11 (2) Other institutions of higher education that  
12 offer programs in physician assistant studies or  
13 other similar areas of studies that are accredited by  
14 the Accreditation Review Commission on Education  
15 for the Physician Assistant.

16 (3) The Transition Assistance Program of the  
17 Department of Defense.

18 (4) The Veterans' Employment and Training  
19 Service of the Department of Labor.

20 (5) Programs carried out under chapter 41 of  
21 title 38, United States Code, for the purpose of mar-  
22 keting and advertising the pilot program to veterans  
23 and members of the Armed Forces who may be in-  
24 terested in the pilot program.



1 (j) ADMINISTRATION OF PILOT PROGRAM.—For pur-  
2 poses of carrying out the pilot program, the Secretary  
3 shall appoint or select within the Office of Physician As-  
4 sistant Services of the Veterans Health Administration the  
5 following:

6 (1) A Deputy Director for Education and Ca-  
7 reer Development of Physician Assistants who—

8 (A) is a physician assistant, a veteran, and  
9 employed by the Department as of the date of  
10 the enactment of this Act;

11 (B) is responsible for—

12 (i) overseeing the pilot program;

13 (ii) recruiting candidates to partici-  
14 pate in the pilot program;

15 (iii) coordinating with individuals par-  
16 ticipating in the pilot program and assist-  
17 ing those individuals in applying and being  
18 admitted to a master's degree program  
19 under the pilot program; and

20 (iv) providing information to eligible  
21 individuals under subsection (b) with re-  
22 spect to the pilot program; and

23 (C) may be employed in the field at a med-  
24 ical center of the Department.

1           (2) A Deputy Director of Recruitment and Re-  
2           tention who—

3                   (A) is a physician assistant, a veteran, and  
4                   employed by the Department as of the date of  
5                   the enactment of this Act;

6                   (B) is responsible for—

7                           (i) identifying and coordinating the  
8                           needs of the pilot program and assist the  
9                           Secretary in providing mentors under sub-  
10                          section (h) to participants in the pilot pro-  
11                          gram; and

12                           (ii) coordinating the staff of facilities  
13                           of the Veterans Health Administration  
14                           with respect to identifying employment po-  
15                           sitions and mentors under subsection (h)  
16                           for participants in the pilot program; and

17                   (C) may be employed in the field at a med-  
18                   ical center of the Department.

19           (3) A recruiter who—

20                   (A) reports directly to the Deputy Director  
21                   of Recruitment and Retention; and

22                   (B) works with the Workforce Manage-  
23                   ment and Consulting Office and the Healthcare  
24                   Talent Management Office of the Veterans  
25                   Health Administration to develop and imple-

1           ment national recruiting strategic plans for the  
2           recruitment and retention of physician assist-  
3           ants within the Department.

4           (4) An administrative assistant, compensated at  
5           a rate not less than level GS-6 of the General  
6           Schedule, or equivalent, who assists with administra-  
7           tive duties relating to the pilot program in the Office  
8           of Physician Assistant Services and such other du-  
9           ties as determined by the Secretary to ensure that  
10          the Office runs effectively and efficiently.

11          (k) REPORT.—

12           (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after  
13          the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary  
14          of Veterans Affairs, in collaboration with the Sec-  
15          retary of Labor, the Secretary of Defense, and the  
16          Secretary of Health and Human Services, shall sub-  
17          mit to Congress a report on the pilot program.

18           (2) ELEMENTS.—The report required by para-  
19          graph (1) shall include the following:

20           (A) The extent to which the pilot program  
21          is effective in improving the ability of eligible  
22          individuals under subsection (b) to become phy-  
23          sician assistants;

24           (B) An examination of whether the pilot  
25          program is achieving the goals of—

1 (i) enabling individuals to build on  
2 medical skills gained as members of the  
3 Armed Forces by entering into the physi-  
4 cian assistant workforce of the Depart-  
5 ment; and

6 (ii) helping to meet the shortage of  
7 physician assistants employed by the De-  
8 partment.

9 (C) An identification of such modifications  
10 to the pilot program as the Secretary of Vet-  
11 erans Affairs, the Secretary of Labor, the Sec-  
12 retary of Defense, and the Secretary of Health  
13 and Human Services consider necessary to meet  
14 the goals described in subparagraph (B).

15 (D) An assessment of whether the pilot  
16 program could serve as a model for other pro-  
17 grams of the Department to assist individuals  
18 in obtaining certification and employment in  
19 other health care fields.

20 (I) SOURCE OF AMOUNTS.—Not less than \$8,000,000  
21 of the amount necessary to carry out the pilot program  
22 shall be derived from amounts appropriated to the Depart-  
23 ment of Veterans Affairs before the date of the enactment  
24 of this Act.

1 **SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF STANDARDS FOR THE DEPART-**  
2 **MENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR USING**  
3 **EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS TO**  
4 **EDUCATE AND HIRE PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
6 shall establish standards described in subsection (b) to im-  
7 prove the use by the Department of Veterans Affairs of  
8 the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Professionals  
9 Educational Assistance Program under chapter 76 of title  
10 38, United States Code, and other educational assistance  
11 programs of the Department, including the pilot program  
12 under section 2, to educate and hire physician assistants  
13 of the Department.

14 (b) STANDARDS.—The standards described in this  
15 subsection are the following:

16 (1) Holding directors of medical centers of the  
17 Department accountable for failure to use the edu-  
18 cational assistance programs described in subsection

19 (a) and other incentives—

20 (A) to advance employees of the Depart-  
21 ment in their education as physician assistants;  
22 and

23 (B) to improve recruitment and retention  
24 of physician assistants.

25 (2) Ensuring that the Department of Veterans  
26 Affairs Education Debt Reduction Program under

1 subchapter VII of chapter 76 of such title is avail-  
2 able for participants in the pilot program under sec-  
3 tion 2 to fill vacant physician assistant positions at  
4 the Department, including by—

5 (A) including in all vacancy announce-  
6 ments for physician assistant positions the  
7 availability of the Education Debt Reduction  
8 Program; and

9 (B) informing applicants to physician as-  
10 sistant positions of their eligibility for the Edu-  
11 cation Debt Reduction Program.

12 (3) Monitoring compliance with the application  
13 process for educational assistance programs de-  
14 scribed in subsection (a) to ensure that such pro-  
15 grams are being fully utilized to carry out this sec-  
16 tion.

17 (4) Creating programs, including through the  
18 use of the Department of Veterans Affairs Employee  
19 Incentive Scholarship Program under subchapter VI  
20 of chapter 76 of such title, to encourage employees  
21 of the Department to apply to accredited physician  
22 assistant programs.

23 (c) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary shall prescribe  
24 such regulations as the Secretary considers appropriate to  
25 carry out this section.

1 **SEC. 4. EXTENSION OF REQUIREMENT FOR COLLECTION**  
2 **OF FEES FOR HOUSING LOANS GUARANTEED**  
3 **BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

4 Section 3729(b)(2) of title 38, United States Code,  
5 is amended—

6 (1) in subparagraph (A)—

7 (A) in clause (iii), by striking “September  
8 30, 2024” and inserting “December 31, 2024”;  
9 and

10 (B) in clause (iv), by striking “September  
11 30, 2024” and inserting “December 31, 2024”;

12 (2) in subparagraph (B)—

13 (A) in clause (i), by striking “September  
14 30, 2024” and inserting “December 31, 2024”;  
15 and

16 (B) in clause (ii), by striking “September  
17 30, 2024” and inserting “December 31, 2024”;

18 (3) in subparagraph (C)—

19 (A) in clause (i), by striking “September  
20 30, 2024” and inserting “December 31, 2024”;  
21 and

22 (B) in clause (ii), by striking “September  
23 30, 2024” and inserting “December 31, 2024”;

24 and

25 (4) in subparagraph (D)—

1 (A) in clause (i), by striking “September  
2 30, 2024” and inserting “December 31, 2024”;  
3 and

4 (B) in clause (ii), by striking “September  
5 30, 2024” and inserting “December 31, 2024”.

Passed the House of Representatives July 28, 2017.

Attest:

*Clerk.*





115<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS  
1<sup>ST</sup> SESSION

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To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to provide educational assistance to certain former members of the Armed Forces for education and training as physician assistants of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.