

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3817

To increase language access to behavioral health services at eligible health centers, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 5, 2023

Ms. MENG (for herself, Mr. FITZPATRICK, and Ms. CLARKE of New York) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

A BILL

To increase language access to behavioral health services at eligible 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 2023”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM TO INCREASE LAN-**
7 **GUAGE ACCESS AT ELIGIBLE HEALTH CEN-**
8 **TERS.**

9 (a) GRANTS.—The Secretary shall carry out a dem-
10 onstration program consisting of awarding grants to eligi-

1 ble health centers to recruit, hire, employ, and supervise
2 qualified behavioral health professionals who—

3 (1) are proficient in speaking and under-
4 standing both spoken English and at least one other
5 spoken language, including any necessary specialized
6 vocabulary, terminology, and phraseology;

7 (2) are able to effectively, accurately, and im-
8 partially communicate directly with limited English
9 proficient individuals in their primary language; and

10 (3) are, or will be, employed—

11 (A) directly by the eligible health center; or

12 (B) through a contract between the eligible
13 health center and the qualified behavioral
14 health professional under which such profes-
15 sional provides services as part of the eligible
16 health center's workforce or under supervision
17 by the health center, in order to provide behav-
18 ioral health services in another language.

19 (b) PREFERENCE.—In selecting grant recipients
20 under subsection (a), the Secretary shall give preference
21 to eligible health centers at which at least 10 percent of
22 the patients are best served in a language other than
23 English, as indicated by data in the Uniform Data System
24 of the Health Resources and Services Administration (or
25 any successor database).

1 (c) OUTREACH.—An eligible health center receiving
2 a grant under this section shall use a portion of the grant
3 funds to disseminate information about the behavioral
4 health services supported through the grant.

5 (d) REPORTS.—

6 (1) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than 6 months
7 after the first grants are awarded under subsection
8 (a), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on
9 Appropriations and the Committee on Energy and
10 Commerce of the House of Representatives, the
11 Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on
12 Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Sen-
13 ate, and other appropriate congressional committees,
14 a report on the implementation of the program
15 under this section. Such report shall include—

16 (A) the languages spoken by the qualified
17 behavioral health professionals recruited pursu-
18 ant to a grant under subsection (a);

19 (B) the eligible health center at which each
20 such professional was placed;

21 (C) how many eligible health centers re-
22 ceived grants under subsection (a);

23 (D) an analysis, conducted in consultation
24 with the eligible health centers receiving grants
25 under subsection (a), of the effectiveness of

1 such grants at increasing language access to be-
2 havioral health services; and

3 (E) best practices, developed in consulta-
4 tion with eligible health centers receiving grants
5 under subsection (a), for the recruitment and
6 retention of qualified behavioral health profes-
7 sionals at such health centers.

8 (2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than the end of
9 fiscal year 2026, the Secretary shall submit to the
10 Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on
11 Energy and Commerce of the House of Representa-
12 tives, the Committee on Appropriations and the
13 Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pen-
14 sions of the Senate, and other appropriate congres-
15 sional committees, a final report on the implementa-
16 tion of the program under this section, including the
17 information, analysis, and best practices described in
18 subparagraphs (A) through (E) of paragraph (1).

19 (e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

20 (1) The term “eligible health center” means a
21 health center (as defined in section 330 of the Pub-
22 lic Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254b)) that is al-
23 ready receiving assistance pursuant to one or more
24 grants under such section 330 at the time of the

1 award to such health center of a supplemental grant
2 under subsection (a).

3 (2) The term “qualified behavioral health pro-
4 fessional” means—

5 (A) a behavioral and mental health profes-
6 sional (as defined in section 331(a)(3)(E)(i) of
7 the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.
8 254d(a)(3)(E)(i)));

9 (B) a substance use disorder counselor;

10 (C) an occupational therapist; or

11 (D) an individual who—

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

16 (ii) will serve at the eligible health
17 center under the supervision of a licensed
18 individual or certified professional so list-
19 ed.

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

22 (f) FUNDING.—Subject to the availability of appro-
23 priations, out of amounts otherwise appropriated under
24 section 760(g) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.
25 294k(g)), the Secretary is authorized to use up to

6

- 1 \$10,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2024 through 2029
- 2 to carry out this section.

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