

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5246

To amend the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 to reauthorize the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network and establish a national agricultural crisis hotline, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 22, 2023

Ms. CARAVEO (for herself, Mr. TONY GONZALES of Texas, and Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture

A BILL

To amend the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 to reauthorize the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network and establish a national agricultural crisis hotline, 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 “National Agricultural
5 Crisis Hotline Act of 2023”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds that—

1 (1) the suicide rate for farmers is 3.5 times
2 higher than the suicide rate of the general popu-
3 lation;

4 (2) male farmers and ranchers have signifi-
5 cantly higher rates of suicide (43.2 per 100,000)
6 compared to the average rate of suicide across other
7 professions (27.4 per 100,000);

8 (3) the percentage of adults ages 26 and older
9 that live in completely rural areas has increased be-
10 tween 2019 and 2020, making completely rural
11 areas the most afflicted county types with respect to
12 alcohol abuse; and

13 (4) evidence suggests that the stigma sur-
14 rounding mental health in farming and ranching
15 communities has decreased but still plays a signifi-
16 cant role in influencing behavior.

17 **SEC. 3. FARM AND RANCH STRESS ASSISTANCE NETWORK.**

18 Section 7522 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy
19 Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 5936) is amended—

20 (1) in subsection (b)(1)—

21 (A) by redesignating subparagraphs (C)
22 and (D) as subparagraphs (D) and (E), respec-
23 tively; and

24 (B) by inserting after subparagraph (B)
25 the following:

1 “(C) mental health training for agriculture
2 professionals (including farm loan officers, ex-
3 tension agents, and State department of agri-
4 culture staff);”;

5 (2) by redesignating subsections (d) through (f)
6 as subsections (e) through (g), respectively;

7 (3) by inserting after subsection (c) the fol-
8 lowing:

9 “(d) NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL CRISIS HOTLINE.—

10 “(1) IN GENERAL.—As part of the Farm and
11 Ranch Stress Assistance Network established under
12 subsection (a), the Secretary shall establish, and
13 maintain directly or by grant or contract, a national
14 agricultural crisis hotline (referred to in this sub-
15 section as the ‘national agricultural crisis hotline’) to
16 provide emotional support, information, suicide crisis
17 intervention, mental health and substance use dis-
18 order, and agricultural support resources to—

19 “(A) farmers, farm managers, farm work-
20 ers, and ranchers affected by mental health and
21 substance use disorders; and

22 “(B) families or household members of
23 those farmers, farm managers, farm workers,
24 and ranchers.

1 “(2) REQUIREMENTS.—The national agricul-
2 tural crisis hotline shall—

3 “(A) provide 24/7 real-time live assistance
4 by voice and through a mobile texting applica-
5 tion;

6 “(B) be staffed 24/7 in accordance with
7 paragraph (4);

8 “(C) provide referral services to meet the
9 needs of family and household members of
10 farmers, ranchers, and related professionals;

11 “(D) offer 24-hour follow-up calls to call-
12 ers;

13 “(E) provide standardized translation serv-
14 ices that meet the needs of the agricultural pop-
15 ulation; and

16 “(F) comply with all Federal, State, and
17 local laws, including the Health Insurance Port-
18 ability and Accountability Act of 1996 (Public
19 Law 104–191; 110 Stat. 1936).

20 “(3) DATA COLLECTION.—The national agricul-
21 tural crisis hotline shall collect the following data:

22 “(A) Call data, including total calls, calls
23 queued, calls answered, calls dropped, and aver-
24 age speed of answer.

1 “(B) Rescue data, including next steps
2 suggested and information provided to the call-
3 er.

4 “(C) Follow-up calls.

5 “(D) Caller information, including—

6 “(i) whether the caller is calling for
7 the first time or is a repeat caller;

8 “(ii) the living situation of the caller;
9 and

10 “(iii) demographic information of the
11 caller.

12 “(E) Reason for call and caller needs and
13 concerns.

14 “(F) Referrals provided, including re-
15 sources provided and strategies employed with
16 respect to addressing the needs and concerns of
17 callers.

18 “(4) STAFFING.—Call responders and super-
19 visors of call responders operating the national agri-
20 cultural crisis hotline shall—

21 “(A) be crisis intervention specialists, li-
22 censed health care professionals, or licensed
23 mental health professionals who—

24 “(i) are trained in providing culturally
25 and linguistically appropriate support;

1 “(ii) have awareness training with re-
2 spect to farm stress and the farming iden-
3 tity; and

4 “(iii) have credentials that enable
5 them to provide evidence-based suicide
6 intervention hotline care, including accredi-
7 tation from the American Association of
8 Suicidology and the Alliance of Informa-
9 tion and Referral Systems; and

10 “(B) meet training requirements developed
11 by the Secretary or the entity maintaining the
12 hotline, as applicable, which, at a minimum,
13 shall include—

14 “(i) at least 80 hours of interactive
15 training and content, which shall include—

16 “(I) elements of applied suicide
17 intervention skills training;

18 “(II) information and training on
19 providing trauma informed support;
20 and

21 “(III) training and content on
22 other relevant clinical topics;

23 “(ii) foundational agriculture mental
24 stress training that includes metrics that
25 demonstrate competency;

1 “(iii) a minimum of 24 hours of direct
2 supervised shifts before answering calls
3 independently; and

4 “(iv) ongoing training on specialized
5 topics on at least a quarterly basis.

6 “(5) PARTNERSHIPS.—

7 “(A) EXISTING HOTLINES.—The Secretary
8 or an entity receiving a grant or contract under
9 paragraph (1), as applicable, shall form part-
10 nerships between the national agricultural crisis
11 hotline and existing farm telephone helplines
12 and websites.

13 “(B) USDA AND OTHER FEDERAL PRO-
14 GRAMS.—The Secretary shall coordinate with—

15 “(i) the Federal Office of Rural
16 Health Policy and offices of the Depart-
17 ment of Agriculture that administer finan-
18 cial assistance programs to farmers and
19 ranchers to provide information about the
20 national agricultural crisis hotline to par-
21 ticipants of those programs; and

22 “(ii) the Substance Abuse and Mental
23 Health Services Administration to refer ag-
24 riculture related calls received through the

1 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline to the na-
2 tional agricultural crisis hotline.

3 “(6) DIRECTORY.—The Secretary or an entity
4 receiving a grant or contract under paragraph (1),
5 as applicable, shall develop, and periodically update,
6 a directory of organizations to which staff of the na-
7 tional agricultural crisis hotline can make referrals.

8 “(7) OUTREACH.—The Secretary shall, in con-
9 sultation with the Department of Health and
10 Human Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental
11 Health Services Administration, any other relevant
12 Federal agencies, and State departments of health
13 and agriculture, conduct a public awareness cam-
14 paign for the national agricultural crisis hotline.

15 “(8) REPORT.—The Secretary shall submit to
16 Congress and make publicly available an annual re-
17 port on the effectiveness of the national agricultural
18 crisis hotline.”; and

19 (4) in subsection (e) (as so redesignated), by
20 striking “\$10,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2019
21 through 2023” and inserting “\$19,000,000 for each
22 of fiscal years 2024 through 2028, of which
23 \$4,000,000 each fiscal year shall be used to carry
24 out subsection (d)”.

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