

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 6388

To authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Administration for Community Living, to carry out a grant program for States to provide telephone reassurance services to certain older adults and to other adults with disabilities, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 13, 2023

Mr. MOLINARO (for himself, Mrs. DINGELL, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina, and Ms. LEE of Nevada) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Administration for Community Living, to carry out a grant program for States to provide telephone reassurance services to certain older adults and to other adults with disabilities, 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 “Friendly Calls for Our
5 Seniors Act of 2023”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 The Congress finds the following:

3 (1) According to the National Academies of
4 Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine report, Social
5 Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults, more than
6 one-third of adults aged 45 and older feel lonely,
7 and nearly one-fourth of adults aged 65 and older,
8 are considered to be socially isolated.

9 (2) According to a recent report released by Dr.
10 Vivek Murthy, the Surgeon General of the United
11 States, “lacking social connection can increase the
12 risk of premature death as much as smoking up to
13 15 cigarettes a day”.

14 (3) According to a 2017 study conducted by
15 AARP, a lack of social contact among older adults
16 is associated with an estimated \$6,700,000,000 in
17 additional Federal spending annually.

18 (4) Seniors and individuals with disabilities in
19 rural communities face additional challenges, includ-
20 ing inadequate access to health care, a lack of com-
21 munity events or activities for the aged, limited
22 transportation and shopping options, and higher
23 rates of poverty.

24 **SEC. 3. TELEPHONE ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM.**

25 (a) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.—

1 (1) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.—The Sec-
2 retary of Health and Human Services (in this Act
3 referred to as the “Secretary”), acting through and
4 with funds available to the Administration for Com-
5 munity Living, shall establish and carry out a pro-
6 gram to make grants to States to provide telephone
7 reassurance services to older adults, and to other
8 adults with disabilities, who are at risk of social iso-
9 lation or loneliness, and do not have supportive as-
10 sistance.

11 (2) RESERVATION OF FUNDS.—

12 (A) AMOUNT ALLOWED.—Not more than 1
13 percent of the amount appropriated to carry out
14 this Act in any fiscal year may be reserved by
15 the Secretary to carry out this Act.

16 (B) FIRST USE OF FUNDS RESERVED.—
17 Funds reserved under subparagraph (A) shall
18 first be used to conduct comprehensive, high-
19 quality evaluations of the programs carried out
20 with grants made under this Act.

21 (b) APPLICATIONS FOR GRANT.—To be eligible to re-
22 ceive a grant under subsection (a), a State shall submit
23 to the Secretary an application in such form, and con-
24 taining such information and assurances, as the Secretary
25 may require, including—

1 (1) assurances that such State will—

2 (A) provide telephone reassurance services
3 to adults described in such subsection who live
4 in rural or medically underserved communities,

5 (B) at the option of such State, use such
6 grant for data analysis, targeted consumer out-
7 reach, improvements to data or technology in-
8 frastructure, and impact evaluations, and

9 (C) submit to the Secretary an annual re-
10 port that excludes personally identifiable infor-
11 mation and that identifies—

12 (i) how such grant was expended to
13 assist such adults and evaluates the overall
14 impact of such funds, and

15 (ii) how such State will work with
16 public and private partners to identify and
17 recruit participants for the telephone reas-
18 surance program, including local referral
19 partners and services, for further assist-
20 ance needed for eligible individuals during
21 phone calls, and

22 (2) a report detailing the information described
23 in paragraph (1), with a particular emphasis on how
24 such State will conduct appropriate follow-up or vol-
25 untary referrals (excluding personally identifiable in-

1 formation) to assurance calls for such circumstances
2 deemed necessary by the Secretary.

3 (c) VOLUNTARY REFERRAL SERVICES.—Voluntary
4 referral services pursuant to grants awarded under this
5 section may include services provided by the local area
6 agency of aging, nutrition home nutrition services under
7 the Older Americans Act of 1965, mental health care re-
8 sources, and other relevant services for such individuals.
9 Except for situations in which an individual shows signs
10 of imminent risk of suicide and or requires immediate
11 medical attention, all such referrals shall be made on a
12 voluntary compliance basis.

13 (d) EVALUATION.—The Secretary may reserve not
14 more than 1 percent of each grant awarded under this
15 section for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive,
16 high-quality evaluation of the services provided pursuant
17 to grants awarded under this section, including methods
18 or technology used to make such calls and input data.

19 (e) USE OF FUNDS.—The grant notice shall clarify
20 that funds may be used for data analysis, dissemination
21 materials to increase awareness of such services, improve-
22 ments to data or technology infrastructure, and impact
23 evaluations.

24 (f) REPORT.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall submit
2 to the appropriate committees of the Congress an
3 annual report that summarizes the information, re-
4 ceived under subsection (b) from participating
5 States and includes—

6 (A) how many adults were served, how
7 often calls were placed and answered, how
8 many voluntary referrals made or connected to
9 other services as needed, and a qualitative re-
10 view on the substance of such calls and overall
11 satisfaction from such adults, and

12 (B) such additional relevant information
13 the Secretary deems appropriate.

14 (2) EXCEPTION FOR PERSONALLY IDENTIFI-
15 ABLE INFORMATION.—The report under paragraph
16 (1) shall not include any personally identifiable in-
17 formation.

18 **SEC. 4. DEFINITIONS.**

19 For purposes of this Act—

20 (1) the term “adult” means an individual more
21 that 18 years of age,

22 (2) the term “disability” has the meaning given
23 it in section 3 of the Americans with Disabilities Act
24 of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12102),

1 (3) the term “older adult” means an individual
2 60 years of age or older, and

3 (4) the term “telephone reassurance services”
4 means regular and weekly telephone calls placed by
5 volunteers, or employed staff, to older adults, and
6 adults with disabilities, who are at risk of social iso-
7 lation or loneliness, and do not have supportive as-
8 sistance.

9 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

10 There is authorized to be appropriated \$5,000,000
11 for each of the fiscal years 2025, 2026, and 2027.

12 **SEC. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

13 This Act shall take effect October 1, 2024.

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