

116TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 8016

To establish a centralized network of peer support warmlines, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 11, 2020

Ms. MUCARSEL-POWELL (for herself, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Ms. JUDY CHU of California, Ms. PORTER, Mr. TRONE, Ms. SHERRILL, and Mr. LOWENTHAL) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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## A BILL

To establish a centralized network of peer support warmlines, 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 “Peer Assisted Relief  
5 Through Networks of Empathetic Resources and Supports  
6 Act of 2020” or the “PARTNERS Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. NATIONAL PEER SUPPORT WARMLINE PROGRAM.**

2 Subpart 3 of part B of title V of the Public Health  
3 Service Act (42 U.S.C. 290bb–31 et seq.) is amended by  
4 adding at the end the following:

5 **“SEC. 520N. NATIONAL PEER SUPPORT WARMLINE PRO-**  
6 **GRAM.**

7 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Assistant Secretary shall es-  
8 tablish and maintain a centralized network of peer support  
9 warmlines to—

10 “(1) provide accessible resources to individuals  
11 seeking mental health support by—

12 “(A) establishing and maintaining a single,  
13 toll-free telephone number through which indi-  
14 viduals throughout the United States may ac-  
15 cess such peer support warmlines; and

16 “(B) coordinating the operation of the tele-  
17 phone number established under subparagraph  
18 (A) with the National Suicide Prevention Life-  
19 line; and

20 “(2) establish best practices for the operation of  
21 peer support warmlines.

22 “(b) CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE.—

23 “(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—In carrying out the  
24 program under this section, not later than 6 months  
25 after the date of enactment of this section, the As-  
26 sistant Secretary shall award a grant to, or enter

1 into a cooperative agreement with, not less than 4  
2 and not more than 5 entities.

3 “(2) ELIGIBLE USES.—An entity receiving a  
4 grant or entering into a cooperative agreement  
5 under this section shall—

6 “(A) for any such entity not operating a  
7 peer support warmline as of the date on which  
8 such entity receives a grant or enters into a co-  
9 operative agreement, establish and operate a  
10 new center of excellence to operate such peer  
11 support warmline; or

12 “(B) for any such entity operating a peer  
13 support warmline that meets the criteria speci-  
14 fied in paragraph (3) as of the date on which  
15 such entity receives a grant or enters into a co-  
16 operative agreement, establish a center of excel-  
17 lence to support and operate such warmline  
18 under the program established under subsection  
19 (a).

20 “(3) CONDITIONS.—As a condition on the re-  
21 ceipt of a grant under this section, the grant recipi-  
22 ent—

23 “(A) may not use grant funds to remu-  
24 nerate an individual who operates a peer sup-  
25 port warmline for the grant recipient unless

1 such individual is an employee of such grant re-  
2 cipient;

3 “(B) shall ensure that employees operating  
4 the peer support warmline are qualified peer  
5 support specialists and experts in peer support  
6 services, including the provision of such services  
7 using telehealth;

8 “(C) shall consider hiring employees who  
9 speak a language other than English, including  
10 a language relevant to the region in which such  
11 grant recipient is located, to operate the peer  
12 support warmline;

13 “(D) shall require that employees oper-  
14 ating the peer support warmline complete—

15 “(i) 2 training courses, consisting of  
16 at least a 10-hour introductory training  
17 course and, within 2 years of employment,  
18 a 40-hour advanced training course, that  
19 cover topics including—

20 “(I) peer support values and  
21 practices;

22 “(II) active listening skills;

23 “(III) structured sharing of per-  
24 sonal or shared experiences; and

25 “(IV) how to—

1           “(aa) connect with an indi-  
2           vidual using a peer support  
3           warmline with compassion;

4           “(bb) avoid giving advice or  
5           providing psychotherapy-like  
6           services to an individual using a  
7           peer support warmline;

8           “(cc) identify when an indi-  
9           vidual using a peer support  
10          warmline is experiencing an event  
11          constituting a suicide emergency  
12          and refer such individual to the  
13          National Suicide Prevention Life-  
14          line;

15          “(dd) collaborate with other  
16          qualified peer support specialists  
17          when an individual using a peer  
18          support warmline experiences a  
19          mental health or suicide crisis;

20          “(ee) refer an individual  
21          using a peer support warmline to  
22          a community-based peer support  
23          organization, other mental health  
24          crisis organization, or licensed

1 mental health professional, as ap-  
2 propriate; and

3 “(ff) assist an individual  
4 who is seeking other peer support  
5 services or a referral to mental  
6 health services, but refrain from  
7 providing any healthcare rec-  
8 ommendations; and

9 “(V) any other training course  
10 that the Assistant Secretary deter-  
11 mines is appropriate; and

12 “(E) shall implement the best practices for  
13 operating peer support warmlines, as identified  
14 by the study required under subsection (d).

15 “(4) SELECTION.—In awarding grants under  
16 this section, the Assistant Secretary shall—

17 “(A) select grant recipients that are lo-  
18 cated in different geographic regions of the  
19 United States which, collectively, represent the  
20 entire United States; and

21 “(B) ensure that each grant recipient is re-  
22 sponsible for maintaining a peer support  
23 warmline that serves the geographic region in  
24 which it is located.

1           “(5) TIMELINE FOR NEW CENTERS OF EXCEL-  
2           LENCE.—Any entity described in paragraph (2)(A)  
3           shall establish a center of excellence under the pro-  
4           gram not later than 6 months after the date on  
5           which the entity receives a grant under subsection  
6           (b).

7           “(c) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER.—Not later  
8           than 30 days after the date of enactment of this section,  
9           the Assistant Secretary shall establish a technical assist-  
10          ance center to—

11           “(1) serve as the coordinating body between the  
12          centers of excellence;

13           “(2) provide technical support to such centers;

14           “(3) disseminate to such centers the best prac-  
15          tices for operating peer support warmlines, as identi-  
16          fied by the study required under subsection (d); and

17           “(4) enforce the implementation of such best  
18          practices in each center of excellence.

19          “(d) STUDY AND REPORT.—

20           “(1) IN GENERAL.—Concurrent with the estab-  
21          lishment of the centers of excellence created under  
22          subsection (b), the Assistant Secretary shall enter  
23          into appropriate arrangements with the National  
24          Academies under which the National Academies  
25          agree to conduct a study over a 1-year period to

1 identify the best practices for operating a peer sup-  
2 port warmline.

3 “(2) ELEMENTS.—The study required under  
4 paragraph (1) shall include an assessment of—

5 “(A) any peer support warmline program  
6 that existed before the date of enactment of this  
7 section, as determined appropriate to include in  
8 the study by the National Academies; and

9 “(B) each of the centers of excellence es-  
10 tablished pursuant to subsection (b).

11 “(3) REPORT.—The agreement entered into  
12 under paragraph (1) shall include a requirement  
13 that the National Academies submit to Congress and  
14 to the technical assistance center established under  
15 subsection (c) a report identifying the best practices  
16 for operating a peer support warmline.

17 “(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There  
18 is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section  
19 \$55,000,000 for fiscal year 2021 and \$50,000,000 for  
20 each of fiscal years 2022 through 2024. Of the funds  
21 made available under the preceding sentence, the Assist-  
22 ant Secretary shall reserve not less than \$1,000,000 for  
23 each fiscal year to carry out subsection (c) and not less  
24 than \$1,500,000 to carry out subsection (d).

25 “(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:



1           “(1) COMMUNITY-BASED PEER SUPPORT ORGA-  
2           NIZATION.—The term ‘community-based peer sup-  
3           port organization’ means an organization, private  
4           enterprise, or nonprofit organization, that—

5                   “(A) provides professional mental health  
6                   peer support services to a community;

7                   “(B) has been operational for not less than  
8                   2 years; and

9                   “(C) has a staff composed of individuals  
10                  with lived experiences of mental health chal-  
11                  lenges and recovery, including qualified peer  
12                  support specialists.

13           “(2) PEER SUPPORT WARMLINE.—The term  
14           ‘peer support warmline’ means a telephone and chat  
15           support service that is provided by a peer to an indi-  
16           vidual who is seeking non-emergent mental health  
17           support, but that is not a mental health service or  
18           a substitution for mental health services provided  
19           through a health care professional or in a health  
20           care setting.

21           “(3) QUALIFIED PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST.—  
22           The term ‘qualified peer support specialist’ means  
23           an individual who—

24                   “(A) is recovering or has recovered from a  
25                   mental health or substance use condition; and

1           “(B) is certified to provide peer support  
2 services by a certification process that—

3           “(i) is consistent with the National  
4 Practice Guidelines for Peer Supporters  
5 published by the National Association of  
6 Peer Supporters and the Core Com-  
7 petencies for Peer Workers in Behavioral  
8 Health Settings published by the Adminis-  
9 tration on December 7, 2015; and

10           “(ii) is a process that—

11           “(I) is a national process that  
12 the Assistant Secretary determines is  
13 appropriate; or

14           “(II) is established by a State in  
15 which such individual provides peer  
16 support services.”.

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