

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8145

To provide for a staffing improvement plan and occupational series for licensed professional mental health counselors and marriage and family therapists of Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 1, 2020

Mrs. HAYES (for herself, Mr. RYAN, Mr. MORELLE, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mr. RUSH, Mr. CLEAVER, Ms. FUDGE, Mr. CARSON of Indiana, Ms. WILD, Mr. O'HALLERAN, Ms. LEE of California, Mr. SOTO, and Mr. CÁRDENAS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To provide for a staffing improvement plan and occupational series for licensed professional mental health counselors and marriage and family therapists of 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. STAFFING IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND OCCUPA-**
2 **TIONAL SERIES FOR LICENSED PROFES-**
3 **SIONAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELORS AND**
4 **MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS OF DE-**
5 **PARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

6 (a) STAFFING PLAN.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 270 days
8 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
9 retary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans’
10 Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Vet-
11 erans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives a
12 plan to address staffing shortages of licensed profes-
13 sional mental health counselors and marriage and
14 family therapists of the Department of Veterans Af-
15 fairs.

16 (2) ELEMENTS.—The plan required by para-
17 graph (1) shall include the following:

18 (A) The number of positions for licensed
19 professional mental health counselors and mar-
20 riage and family therapists of the Department
21 that need to be filled to meet demand,
22 disaggregated by Veterans Integrated Service
23 Network and medical center.

24 (B) An identification of the steps that the
25 Secretary will take in each Veterans Integrated

1 Service Network to address such shortages, in-
2 cluding the following:

3 (i) A description of any region-specific
4 hiring incentives to be used by the Sec-
5 retary in consultation with the directors of
6 Veterans Integrated Service Networks and
7 medical centers of the Department.

8 (ii) A description of any local reten-
9 tion or engagement incentives to be used
10 by directors of Veterans Integrated Service
11 Networks.

12 (C) Such recommendations for legislative
13 or administrative action as the Secretary, in
14 consultation with the Inspector General of the
15 Department of Veterans Affairs, considers nec-
16 essary to aid in addressing staffing shortages of
17 licensed professional mental health counselors
18 and marriage and family therapists of the De-
19 partment.

20 (b) OCCUPATIONAL SERIES FOR CERTAIN MENTAL
21 HEALTH PROVIDERS.—Not later than one year after the
22 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Vet-
23 erans Affairs, in consultation with the Office of Personnel
24 Management, shall develop—

1 (1) an occupational series for licensed profes-
2 sional mental health counselors of the Department
3 of Veterans Affairs; and

4 (2) an occupational series for marriage and
5 family therapists of the Department.

6 (c) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the sub-
7 mittal of the plan required by subsection (a), the Secretary
8 shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the
9 Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the
10 House of Representatives a report setting forth the num-
11 ber of licensed professional mental health counselors and
12 marriage and family therapists hired by the Department
13 during the one-year period preceding the submittal of the
14 report, disaggregated by Veterans Integrated Service Net-
15 work and medical center.

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