

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8168

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to award grants to establish, or expand upon, master's degree programs in orthotics and prosthetics, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 30, 2024

Mr. CARTWRIGHT (for himself, Mr. GRIJALVA, Ms. NORTON, Mr. COHEN, Mr. GOTTHEIMER, Mr. MOYLAN, Mr. RUIZ, and Mr. BILIRAKIS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to award grants to establish, or expand upon, master's degree programs in orthotics and prosthetics, 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 “Wounded Warrior
5 Workforce Enhancement Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. ORTHOTICS AND PROSTHETICS EDUCATION IM-**
7 **PROVEMENT.**

8 (a) GRANTS REQUIRED.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans
2 Affairs shall award grants to eligible institutions to
3 enable the eligible institutions—

4 (A) to establish a master’s degree program
5 in orthotics and prosthetics; or

6 (B) to expand upon an existing master’s
7 degree program in orthotics and prosthetics, in-
8 cluding by admitting more students, further
9 training faculty, expanding facilities, or increas-
10 ing cooperation with the Department of Vet-
11 erans Affairs and the Department of Defense.

12 (2) PRIORITY.—The Secretary shall give pri-
13 ority in the award of grants under this section to eli-
14 gible institutions that have entered into an estab-
15 lished association with a medical center or clinic ad-
16 ministered by the Department of Veterans Affairs or
17 a facility administered by the Department of De-
18 fense, including by providing clinical rotations at
19 such medical center, clinic, or facility.

20 (3) GRANT AMOUNTS.—Grants awarded under
21 this section shall be in amounts of not less than
22 \$1,000,000 and not more than \$1,500,000.

23 (b) REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS.—

24 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days
25 after the date of the enactment of this Act, and not

1 less frequently than annually thereafter for two
2 years, the Secretary shall issue a request for pro-
3 posals from eligible institutions for grants under this
4 section.

5 (2) PROPOSALS.—An eligible institution that
6 seeks the award of a grant under this section shall
7 submit an application therefor to the Secretary at
8 such time, in such manner, and accompanied by
9 such information as the Secretary may require, in-
10 cluding—

11 (A) demonstration of a willingness and
12 ability to participate in an established associa-
13 tion described in subsection (a)(2); and

14 (B) a commitment, and demonstration of
15 an ability, to maintain an accredited orthotics
16 and prosthetics education program after the
17 end of the grant period.

18 (c) GRANT USES.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible institution
20 awarded a grant under this section shall use grant
21 amounts to carry out any of the following:

22 (A) Building new or expanding existing
23 orthotics and prosthetics master's degree pro-
24 grams.

1 (B) Training doctoral candidates in fields
2 related to orthotics and prosthetics to prepare
3 them to instruct in orthotics and prosthetics
4 programs.

5 (C) Training faculty in orthotics and pros-
6 thetics education or related fields for the pur-
7 pose of instruction in orthotics and prosthetics
8 programs.

9 (D) Salary supplementation for faculty in
10 orthotics and prosthetics education.

11 (E) Financial aid that allows eligible insti-
12 tutions to admit additional students to study
13 orthotics and prosthetics, with a priority given
14 to covered veterans.

15 (F) Funding faculty research projects or
16 faculty time to undertake research in the areas
17 of orthotics and prosthetics for the purpose of
18 furthering their teaching abilities.

19 (G) Renovation of buildings or minor con-
20 struction to house orthotics and prosthetics
21 education programs.

22 (H) Purchasing equipment for orthotics
23 and prosthetics education.

24 (2) LIMITATION ON CONSTRUCTION.—An eligi-
25 ble institution awarded a grant under this section

1 may use not more than 50 percent of the grant
2 amount to carry out paragraph (1)(G).

3 (3) ADMISSIONS PREFERENCE.—An eligible in-
4 stitution awarded a grant under this section shall
5 give preference in admission to the orthotics and
6 prosthetics master’s degree programs to veterans, to
7 the extent practicable.

8 (4) FINANCIAL AID PREFERENCE.—An eligible
9 institution awarded a grant under this section shall
10 give preference in awarding financial aid to students
11 in the orthotics and prosthetics master’s degree pro-
12 grams to covered veterans.

13 (5) PERIOD OF USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible in-
14 stitution awarded a grant under this section may use
15 the grant amount for a period of three years after
16 the award of the grant.

17 (d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

18 (1) The term “eligible institution” means an
19 educational institution that offers an orthotics and
20 prosthetics education program that—

21 (A) is accredited by the Commission on
22 Accreditation of Allied Health Education Pro-
23 grams in cooperation with the National Com-
24 mission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education;
25 or

1 (B) demonstrates an ability to meet the ac-
2 creditation requirements for orthotic and pros-
3 thetic education from the Commission on Ac-
4 creditation of Allied Health Education Pro-
5 grams in cooperation with the National Com-
6 mission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education if
7 the institution receives a grant under this sec-
8 tion.

9 (2) The term “veteran” has the meaning given
10 that term in section 101 of title 38, United States
11 Code.

12 (3) The term “covered veteran” means a vet-
13 eran with lived experience with limb loss or mobility
14 impairment.

15 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be
17 appropriated for fiscal year 2025 for the Depart-
18 ment of Veterans Affairs, \$15,000,000 to carry out
19 this section. The amount so authorized to be appro-
20 priated shall remain available for obligation until
21 September 30, 2027.

22 (2) UNOBLIGATED AMOUNTS TO BE RETURNED
23 TO THE TREASURY.—Any amounts authorized to be
24 appropriated by paragraph (1) that are not obligated

1 by the Secretary as of September 30, 2027, shall be
2 returned to the Treasury of the United States.

3 **SEC. 3. CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN ORTHOTIC AND PROS-**
4 **THETIC EDUCATION.**

5 (a) GRANT FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF CENTER.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans
7 Affairs shall award a grant to an eligible institution
8 to enable the eligible institution—

9 (A) to establish the Center of Excellence in
10 Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (in this sec-
11 tion referred to as the “Center”); and

12 (B) to enable the eligible institution to im-
13 prove orthotic and prosthetic outcomes for vet-
14 erans, members of the Armed Forces, and civil-
15 ians by conducting evidence-based research
16 on—

17 (i) the knowledge, skills, and training
18 most needed by clinical professionals in the
19 field of orthotics and prosthetics; and

20 (ii) how to most effectively prepare
21 clinical professionals to provide effective,
22 high-quality orthotic and prosthetic care.

23 (2) PRIORITY.—The Secretary shall give pri-
24 ority in the award of a grant under this section to
25 an eligible institution that has in force, or dem-

1 onstrates the willingness and ability to enter into, a
2 memoranda of understanding with the Department
3 of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense, or
4 other appropriate Federal agency, or a cooperative
5 agreement with an appropriate private sector entity,
6 which memorandum of understanding or cooperative
7 agreement provides for either, or both, of the fol-
8 lowing:

9 (A) The provision of resources, whether in
10 cash or in-kind, to the Center.

11 (B) Assistance to the Center in conducting
12 research and disseminating the results of such
13 research.

14 (3) GRANT AMOUNT.—The grant awarded
15 under this section shall be in the amount of
16 \$5,000,000.

17 (b) REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS.—

18 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after
19 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
20 shall issue a request for proposals from eligible insti-
21 tutions for the grant under this section.

22 (2) PROPOSALS.—An eligible institution that
23 seeks the award of the grant under this section shall
24 submit an application therefor to the Secretary at

1 such time, in such manner, and accompanied by
2 such information as the Secretary may require.

3 (c) GRANT USES.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—The eligible institution
5 awarded the grant under this section shall use the
6 grant amount as follows:

7 (A) To develop an agenda for orthotics and
8 prosthetics education research.

9 (B) To fund research in the area of
10 orthotics and prosthetics education.

11 (C) To publish or otherwise disseminate
12 research findings relating to orthotics and pros-
13 thetics education.

14 (2) PERIOD OF USE OF FUNDS.—The eligible
15 institution awarded the grant under this section may
16 use the grant amount for a period of five years after
17 the award of the grant.

18 (d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

19 (1) The term “eligible institution” means an
20 educational institution that—

21 (A) has a robust research program;

22 (B) offers an orthotics and prosthetics
23 education program that is accredited by the
24 Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health
25 Education Programs in cooperation with the

1 National Commission on Orthotic and Pros-
2 thetic Education;

3 (C) is well recognized in the field of
4 orthotics and prosthetics education; and

5 (D) has an established association with—

6 (i) a medical center or clinic of the
7 Department of Veterans Affairs; and

8 (ii) a local rehabilitation hospital.

9 (2) The term “veteran” has the meaning given
10 that term in section 101 of title 38, United States
11 Code.

12 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
13 authorized to be appropriated for fiscal year 2025 for the
14 Department of Veterans Affairs, \$5,000,000 to carry out
15 this section.

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