

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4071

To establish an Office of Colonias and Farmworker Initiatives within the Department of Agriculture, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 22, 2024

Mr. HEINRICH introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

A BILL

To establish an Office of Colonias and Farmworker Initiatives within the Department of Agriculture, 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 “Office of Colonias and
5 Farmworker Initiatives Establishment Act of 2024”.

1 **SEC. 2. OFFICE OF COLONIAS AND FARMWORKER INITIA-**
 2 **TIVES; COLONIAS AND FARMWORKER INITIA-**
 3 **TIVES COORDINATING COMMITTEE.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subtitle A of the Department of
 5 Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6912
 6 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

7 **“SEC. 224B. OFFICE OF COLONIAS AND FARMWORKER INI-**
 8 **TIATIVES.**

9 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall estab-
 10 lish and maintain in the Department an Office of Colonias
 11 and Farmworker Initiatives (referred to in this section as
 12 the ‘Office’)—

13 “(1) to improve engagement with, and service
 14 to, border colonias communities, farmworkers, and
 15 the family members and children of farmworkers;

16 “(2) to improve collaboration between the De-
 17 partment and national, State, and local colonias and
 18 farmworker programs and nonprofit organizations;
 19 and

20 “(3) to carry out other such functions as the
 21 Secretary determines to be appropriate.

22 “(b) DUTIES.—The Office shall ensure that border
 23 colonias communities, farmworkers, the family members
 24 and children of farmworkers, and nonprofit organizations
 25 representing or assisting such communities and individ-

1 uals have equitable access to, and equitable participation
2 in, programs and services of the Department by—

3 “(1) establishing and monitoring the goals and
4 objectives of the Department to increase participa-
5 tion of such communities, individuals, and nonprofit
6 organizations in Department programs;

7 “(2) assessing the effectiveness of Department
8 outreach programs to such communities, individuals,
9 and nonprofit organizations;

10 “(3) developing and implementing a plan to co-
11 ordinate outreach activities and services to such
12 communities, individuals, and nonprofit organiza-
13 tions provided by—

14 “(A) the Department; and

15 “(B) other Federal agencies, including
16 services relating to housing, education, health
17 care, and infrastructure development;

18 “(4) providing input to the Department and
19 other Federal agencies on programmatic and policy
20 decisions relating to such communities, individuals,
21 and nonprofit organizations, including—

22 “(A) identifying obstacles for access to
23 programs and resources; and

24 “(B) elevating Federal, State, and local
25 best practices;

1 “(5) measuring outcomes of the programs and
2 activities of the Department to serve such commu-
3 nities and individuals;

4 “(6) recommending new initiatives and pro-
5 grams to the Secretary;

6 “(7) providing technical assistance to such or-
7 ganizations with respect to Department programs
8 and resources; and

9 “(8) carrying out any other related duties that
10 the Secretary determines to be appropriate.

11 “(c) COLONIAS COORDINATOR.—

12 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall estab-
13 lish within the Office the position of Colonias Coor-
14 dinator (referred to in this subsection as the ‘Coor-
15 dinator’).

16 “(2) DUTIES.—The Secretary shall delegate to
17 the Coordinator responsibility for the following:

18 “(A) Serving as a liaison to nonprofit or-
19 ganizations that represent and have dem-
20 onstrated experience serving and working in
21 colonias communities.

22 “(B) Coordinating with the Department,
23 other Federal agencies, and State and local gov-
24 ernments to ensure that the needs of colonias
25 communities are assessed and met, including

1 during declared disasters and other emer-
2 gencies.

3 “(C) Consulting within the Office and with
4 other entities to better integrate perspectives,
5 concerns, and interest of colonias communities
6 into the ongoing programs of the Department.

7 **“SEC. 224C. COLONIAS AND FARMWORKER INITIATIVES CO-**
8 **ORDINATING COMMITTEE.**

9 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMITTEE.—The Sec-
10 retary shall establish and convene a Federal coordinating
11 committee, to be known as the ‘Colonias and Farmworker
12 Initiatives Coordinating Committee’ (referred to in this
13 section as the ‘Committee’), to provide advice and guid-
14 ance to the Secretary on matters relating to colonias and
15 farmworker affairs.

16 “(b) MEMBERSHIP AND COMPOSITION.—The Com-
17 mittee shall be composed of the following members:

18 “(1) 1 representative from each of the fol-
19 lowing:

20 “(A) The Department of Housing and
21 Urban Development.

22 “(B) The Department of the Treasury.

23 “(C) The Environmental Protection Agen-
24 cy.

1 “(D) The Department of Health and
2 Human Services.

3 “(E) The Department of Education.

4 “(F) The Small Business Administration.

5 “(G) The Department of Labor.

6 “(H) The Federal Emergency Management
7 Agency.

8 “(2) Such representatives not described in
9 paragraph (1) as the Secretary determines to be ap-
10 propriate.

11 “(c) DUTIES OF COMMITTEE.—The Committee
12 shall—

13 “(1) direct a working group composed of mem-
14 bers of the Committee (or designees of such mem-
15 bers) and representatives from other Federal agen-
16 cies and mission areas within the Department (such
17 as the Rural Housing Service, the Rural Utilities
18 Service, the Rural Business-Cooperative Service, the
19 Food and Nutrition Service, and the Farm Service
20 Agency);

21 “(2) engage stakeholders and identify State and
22 municipal best practices to assist colonias commu-
23 nities, farmworkers, and the family members and
24 children of farmworkers;

1 “(3) submit to the Secretary recommendations
2 on, and solutions to, issues raised at the local, re-
3 gional, or national level; and

4 “(4) identify and propose solutions to any inter-
5 departmental barriers between the Department and
6 other Federal agencies.

7 “(d) FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT EXEMP-
8 TION.—Section 1013 of title 5, United States Code, shall
9 not apply to the Committee.

10 “(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
11 is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to carry
12 out this section \$2,500,000 for each of fiscal years 2024
13 through 2029.”.

14 (b) TRANSFER OF POSITION OF FARMWORKER COOR-
15 DINATOR.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Farmworker Coordi-
17 nator position established under section 226B(f) of
18 the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act
19 of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6934(f)) (as in effect on the day
20 before the date of enactment of this Act) is trans-
21 ferred to the Office of Colonias and Farmworker Ini-
22 tiatives established under section 224B of the De-
23 partment of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994
24 (as added by subsection (a)).

1 (2) TRANSFER OF LEGAL PROVISIONS.—The
2 Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of
3 1994 is amended—

4 (A) by moving subsection (f) of section
5 226B (7 U.S.C. 6934) so as to appear at the
6 end of section 224B (as added by subsection
7 (a)); and

8 (B) by redesignating that subsection as
9 subsection (d).

10 (c) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

11 (1) Section 225 of subtitle A of the Department
12 of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C.
13 6925) is redesignated as section 224A.

14 (2) Section 296(b) of the Department of Agri-
15 culture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C.
16 7014(b)) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
17 lowing:

18 “(11) The authority of the Secretary to carry
19 out the amendments made to this title by the Office
20 of Colonias and Farmworker Initiatives Establish-
21 ment Act of 2024”.

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