

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4892

To amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to establish a grant program for first responder mental health and wellness, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 31, 2024

Mrs. GILLIBRAND (for herself and Mr. HAWLEY) introduced the following bill;
which was read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to establish a grant program for first responder mental health and wellness, 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 “The First Responders
5 Wellness Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. GRANT PROGRAM.**

2 Section 1701 of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control
3 and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. 10381) is amend-
4 ed by adding at the end the following:

5 “(q) MENTAL HEALTH DEMONSTRATION PRO-
6 GRAM.—

7 “(1) DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM.—Upon an ap-
8 proved application by the Attorney General under
9 paragraph (3), an eligible entity may use amounts
10 from a grant under subsection (a) to carry out a
11 mental health service professional demonstration
12 program to—

13 “(A) provide culturally competent, con-
14 fidential, and independent mental health serv-
15 ices to law enforcement officers; and

16 “(B) increase the number of culturally
17 competent mental health services providers
18 available to law enforcement officers.

19 “(2) CONSULTATION.—In carrying out this sub-
20 section, the Attorney General shall consult with the
21 Secretary of Education and the Secretary of Health
22 and Human Services.

23 “(3) APPLICATIONS.—

24 “(A) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity
25 seeking to use amounts from a grant to carry
26 out a demonstration program described in this

1 subsection shall submit to the Attorney General
2 an application at such time and in such manner
3 as the Attorney General may reasonably re-
4 quire.

5 “(B) PRIORITY.—In reviewing applications
6 received from eligible entities under this para-
7 graph, the Attorney General shall give priority
8 to—

9 “(i) eligible entities planning a part-
10 nership with an institution of higher edu-
11 cation for the purposes of placing graduate
12 students with law enforcement officers to
13 complete required field work, credit hours,
14 internships, or related training as applica-
15 ble for the degree, license, or credential
16 program of each graduate student;

17 “(ii) eligible entities that are located
18 in rural areas; and

19 “(iii) eligible entities that demonstrate
20 programmatic infrastructure to ensure that
21 the demonstration program carried out by
22 the eligible entity under this subsection will
23 provide mental health services independent
24 of the leadership or management of law en-
25 forcement agencies.

1 “(4) CONFIDENTIALITY REQUIREMENTS.—Any
2 mental health services provider providing services to
3 a law enforcement officer under the demonstration
4 program described in this subsection—

5 “(A) shall adhere to strict confidentiality
6 responsibilities; and

7 “(B) may not share with the leadership or
8 management of a law enforcement agency any
9 identifiable information of a law enforcement
10 officer resulting from the provision of mental
11 health programs, counseling, or services.

12 “(5) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—
13 There are authorized to be appropriated to the At-
14 torney General \$25,000,000 for each of fiscal years
15 2025 through 2031 to carry out this subsection.

16 “(6) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

17 “(A) CONSORTIUM.—The term ‘consor-
18 tium’ means a partnership that—

19 “(i) includes not less than 1 Federal,
20 State, or local law enforcement agency;
21 and

22 “(ii) may include—

23 “(I) a unit of local government;

24 “(II) an institution of higher
25 education;

1 “(III) a first responder union;
2 “(IV) a benevolent association;
3 and
4 “(V) a law enforcement profes-
5 sional association.

6 “(B) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligi-
7 ble entity’ means a State, unit of local govern-
8 ment, Indian tribal government, law enforce-
9 ment agency, or multi-jurisdictional or regional
10 consortium that receives a grant under sub-
11 section (a).

12 “(C) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDU-
13 CATION.—The term ‘institution of higher edu-
14 cation’ has the meaning given the term in sec-
15 tion 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965
16 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

17 “(D) LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER.—The
18 term ‘law enforcement officer’—

19 “(i) has the meaning given the term
20 in section 1204; and

21 “(ii) includes—

22 “(I) a public safety telecommuni-
23 cator, including 911 operators and
24 fire dispatchers; and

1 “(II) a retired law enforcement
2 officer.

3 “(E) MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES PRO-
4 VIDER.—The term ‘mental health service pro-
5 vider’—

6 “(i) includes a State-licensed or State-
7 certified counselor, trauma counselor, psy-
8 chologist, or other State-licensed or cer-
9 tified mental health professional who is
10 qualified under State law to provide mental
11 health services; and

12 “(ii) may include an individual who
13 is—

14 “(I) enrolled in a graduate pro-
15 gram; and

16 “(II) under the supervision of an
17 individual described in clause (i).”.

18 **SEC. 3. FIRST RESPONDERS MENTAL HEALTH HOTLINE.**

19 Part P of title III of the Public Health Service Act
20 (42 U.S.C. 280g et seq.) is amended by adding at the end
21 the following:

22 **“SEC. 399V-8. FIRST RESPONDERS MENTAL HEALTH HOT-**
23 **LINE.**

24 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 2 years after the
25 date of enactment of this section, the Secretary, acting

1 through the Assistant Secretary for the Substance Abuse
2 and Mental Health Administration, shall maintain, di-
3 rectly or by contract or grant, a national first responders
4 emergency hotline to provide peer and emotional support,
5 information, brief intervention, and mental or behavioral
6 health and substance use disorder resources and referrals
7 to first responders and to their families or household mem-
8 bers.

9 “(b) REQUIREMENTS FOR HOTLINE.—The hotline
10 established under subsection (a) shall—

11 “(1) operate as a separate, widely recognizable
12 number with bidirectional transfer options with the
13 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline established pursuant
14 to section 520E–3 of this Act;

15 “(2) provide toll-free, real-time, live assistance
16 24/7;

17 “(3) provide voice and text support;

18 “(4) be sufficiently staffed by, at a minimum,
19 culturally competent first responder peer specialists
20 or first responder mental health services providers
21 who have distinct knowledge of, and are trained
22 on—

23 “(A) the essential functions of first re-
24 sponders and public safety organizations;

1 “(B) the working conditions unique to first
2 responders;

3 “(C) common and novel stressors inherent
4 in public safety and emergency response work;

5 “(D) normal and abnormal adaptation to
6 occupational stress and trauma; and

7 “(E) the unique aspects of confidentiality
8 and testimonial privilege; and

9 “(5) provide peer support, mental and behav-
10 ioral health and substance use disorder assistance,
11 and referral services to meet the needs of first re-
12 sponders and family members or household members
13 at risk of experiencing mental or behavioral health
14 or substance use disorders.

15 “(c) ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS.—

16 “(1) IN GENERAL.—In maintaining the hotline
17 under subsection (a), the Secretary shall—

18 “(A) consult with the Domestic Violence
19 Hotline, National Suicide Prevention Lifeline,
20 and Veterans Crisis Line to ensure that first
21 responders are connected in real-time to the ap-
22 propriate specialized hotline service, when appli-
23 cable;

24 “(B) conduct a public awareness campaign
25 for the hotline;

1 “(C) consult with Federal departments and
2 agencies, including the Substance Abuse and
3 Mental Health Services Administration and the
4 Department of Justice, to increase awareness
5 regarding the hotline; and

6 “(D) consult with organizations that oper-
7 ate existing crisis or peer support hotlines for
8 first responders with respect to best practices
9 for operating such hotlines.

10 “(2) EXISTING HOTLINES.—The Secretary or
11 an entity receiving a grant or contract under sub-
12 section (a), as applicable, shall form partnerships be-
13 tween the existing national first responders mental
14 health hotline and other first responder helplines
15 and websites.

16 “(3) COORDINATION.—The Secretary shall en-
17 sure that calls from public safety personnel received
18 through the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline are ap-
19 propriately referred to the hotline under subsection
20 (a).

21 “(4) TRAINING CURRICULUM.—Not later than 2
22 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the
23 Secretary shall develop, in coordination with mental
24 health providers and first responder associations or
25 personnel, trauma-informed, culturally competent

1 training for 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline network
2 centers for the purposes of informing all 988 Suicide
3 and Crisis Lifeline personnel about the unique con-
4 cerns, resources, linkages, and stressors of first re-
5 sponders.

6 “(d) ANNUAL REPORT.—The Secretary shall submit
7 an annual report to Congress on the hotline under sub-
8 section (a) and implementation of this section, including—

9 “(1) an evaluation of the effectiveness of activi-
10 ties conducted or supported under subsection (a);

11 “(2) a directory of entities or organizations to
12 which staff maintaining the hotline funded under
13 this section may make referrals; and

14 “(3) such additional information as the Sec-
15 retary determines appropriate.

16 “(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

17 “(1) CULTURALLY COMPETENT FIRST RE-
18 SPONDER PEER SPECIALIST.—The term ‘culturally
19 competent first responder peer specialist’ may in-
20 clude an individual with familiarity with, and under-
21 standing of, the duties and unique stressors of first
22 responders, which may include experience working as
23 a first responder.

24 “(2) FIRST RESPONDER.—The term ‘first re-
25 sponder’—

1 “(A) means—

2 “(i) a law enforcement officer, fire-
3 fighter, or member of a rescue squad or
4 ambulance crew (as such terms are defined
5 in section 1204 of title I of the Omnibus
6 Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of
7 1968); or

8 “(ii) a public safety telecommunicator,
9 including 9–1–1 operators and dispatchers;
10 and

11 “(B) includes a retired first responder.

12 “(3) FIRST RESPONDER MENTAL HEALTH
13 SERVICES PROVIDER.—The term ‘first responder
14 mental health services provider’ includes a State-li-
15 censed or State-certified counselor, trauma coun-
16 selor, psychologist or other State licensed or certified
17 mental health professional who—

18 “(A) is qualified under State law to pro-
19 vide mental health services; and

20 “(B) has a familiarity with and under-
21 standing of the duties and unique stressors of
22 first responders.

23 “(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—To
24 carry out this section, there are authorized to be appro-

1 priated \$10,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2025 through
2 2031.”.

○