

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 854

To amend the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to provide for the establishment of Youth Corps programs and provide for wider dissemination of the Youth Corps model.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 4, 2021

Ms. WILSON of Florida introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

A BILL

To amend the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to provide for the establishment of Youth Corps programs and provide for wider dissemination of the Youth Corps model.

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 “Youth Corps Act of
5 2021”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Nationally, there are an estimated
2 5,500,000 youth, ages 16 through 24, out-of-school
3 and out-of-work, with an additional over 500,000
4 young people dropping out of school each year. At
5 present, the unemployment rate for youth ages 16
6 through 24 is approximately 17 percent. For youth
7 who are in low-income or minority communities, or
8 who have disabilities, this rate is significantly high-
9 er.

10 (2) Youth Service and Conservation Corps pro-
11 grams, descended from the Civilian Conservation
12 Corps of the 1930s, have been preparing disadvan-
13 taged and disconnected youth for careers in resource
14 conservation, environmental restoration, land man-
15 agement, building renovation and weatherization,
16 education, human services, health care, homeland se-
17 curity, and disaster relief for over 4 decades. To
18 date, nearly a million young people have found a
19 new start through a Youth Service and Conservation
20 Corps program.

21 (3) Today, over 125 Youth Service and Con-
22 servation Corps programs are being carried out in
23 50 States and the District of Columbia, and employ-
24 ing a research-driven strategy, called the Youth
25 Corps model, to reengage and provide educational

1 and economic opportunity to around 30,000 young
2 people each year. These Corps members participate
3 in 13.5 million hours of community service annually.

4 (4) According to a recent study by the Corpora-
5 tion for National and Community Service, partici-
6 pating in service increases your likelihood of finding
7 employment by 27 percent. When limited to individ-
8 uals living in rural areas or without a high school di-
9 ploma, the increase in likelihood of gaining employ-
10 ment jumps to 55 percent and 51 percent, respec-
11 tively.

12 (5) Due to the many benefits and positive out-
13 comes, not only for program participants but also
14 for the communities in which they serve, the Youth
15 Corps model is a proven strategy for reengaging dis-
16 connected youth in education and the workforce,
17 while improving communities and the environment.

18 **SEC. 3. YOUTH CORPS PROGRAMS.**

19 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subtitle D of title I of the Work-
20 force Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3221 et
21 seq.) is amended by inserting after section 171 (29 U.S.C.
22 3226) the following new section:

23 **“SEC. 171A. YOUTH CORPS PROGRAMS.**

24 “(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this section is to uti-
25 lize service, environmental stewardship, and the Youth

1 Corps model to educate and train the next generation of
2 workers to enable them to find meaningful employment
3 in the economy of the 21st century, and instill in them
4 a sense of civic engagement and environmental steward-
5 ship.

6 “(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

7 “(1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligible en-
8 tity’ means a public or private nonprofit agency or
9 organization (including a consortium of such agen-
10 cies or organizations), including—

11 “(A) a community-based organization;

12 “(B) a faith-based organization;

13 “(C) a community action agency;

14 “(D) a community development corpora-
15 tion;

16 “(E) an entity carrying out activities under
17 this title, such as a local board;

18 “(F) an Indian tribe or other agency pri-
19 marily serving Indians;

20 “(G) a public or private institution of high-
21 er education;

22 “(H) a State or unit of general local gov-
23 ernment; or

24 “(I) a State or local youth service or con-
25 servation corps.

1 “(2) ELIGIBLE YOUTH.—Notwithstanding sec-
2 tion 3, the term ‘eligible youth’ means an individual
3 eligible to participate in a Youth Corps program in
4 accordance with subsection (d).

5 “(3) INDIAN; INDIAN TRIBE.—The terms ‘In-
6 dian’ and ‘Indian tribe’ have the meanings given the
7 terms in section 166(b).

8 “(4) PARTICIPANT.—The term ‘participant’ in-
9 cludes a recipient of services under paragraph
10 (5)(F).

11 “(5) YOUTH CORPS MODEL.—The term ‘Youth
12 Corps model’ means a model for a youth education
13 and training program for which an eligible entity—

14 “(A) provides eligible youth with stipended
15 or paid work experience, and basic and tech-
16 nical skills training leading, at a minimum, to
17 an outcome consisting of—

18 “(i) enrollment in postsecondary edu-
19 cation or training;

20 “(ii) attainment of an industry-recog-
21 nized certification or credential;

22 “(iii) meaningful employment in the
23 economy of the 21st century; or

24 “(iv) military service;

1 “(B) provides eligible youth with opportu-
2 nities for educational advancement, including
3 the attainment of a secondary school diploma or
4 its recognized equivalent, or other State-recog-
5 nized credential;

6 “(C) engages eligible youth to work, in
7 teams or crews under the leadership of adult
8 mentors and trainers, on service and conserva-
9 tion projects designed to improve the commu-
10 nities in which the youth live and the environ-
11 ment;

12 “(D) works with youth- and family-serving
13 systems, such as child welfare and justice sys-
14 tems, to provide and coordinate supportive serv-
15 ices for education and training program partici-
16 pants;

17 “(E) works with program partners in the
18 local workforce investment system, institutions
19 of higher education, or other community-based
20 organizations to develop pathways to subse-
21 quent enrollment in education or training, at-
22 tainment of an industry-recognized certification
23 or credential, meaningful employment, or serv-
24 ice as described in subparagraph (A); and

1 “(F) provides 12 months of followup serv-
2 ices and tracking for the program graduates.

3 “(c) YOUTH CORPS GRANTS.—

4 “(1) AMOUNTS OF GRANTS.—The Secretary is
5 authorized to make grants to eligible entities for the
6 purpose of carrying out Youth Corps programs ap-
7 proved under this section.

8 “(2) TERM OF GRANTS.—The Secretary is au-
9 thorized to make the grants for terms of up to 3
10 years in length, and is authorized to renew the
11 grants.

12 “(3) ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES.—An entity that re-
13 ceives a grant under this subsection—

14 “(A) shall use the funds made available
15 through the grant to carry out a Youth Corps
16 program that utilizes the Youth Corps model to
17 provide to the participants, prior to graduation
18 from the program—

19 “(i) education, which may include—

20 “(I) basic instruction and reme-
21 dial education;

22 “(II) language instruction for in-
23 dividuals with limited English pro-
24 ficiency;

1 “(III) secondary education serv-
2 ices and activities, including dropout
3 prevention, tutoring, and other activi-
4 ties, that—

5 “(aa) are designed to lead to
6 the attainment of a secondary
7 school diploma or its recognized
8 equivalent, or other State-recog-
9 nized credential (including a cre-
10 dential for meeting recognized al-
11 ternative standards for individ-
12 uals with disabilities); and

13 “(bb) are delivered in con-
14 junction with project-based serv-
15 ice-learning to the maximum de-
16 gree practicable; and

17 “(IV) preparation for and access
18 to postsecondary education opportuni-
19 ties, including counseling and assist-
20 ance with applying for student finan-
21 cial aid;

22 “(ii) work readiness training, which
23 may include—

24 “(I) development of basic skills,
25 such as—

1 “(aa) arriving on time to
2 work;

3 “(bb) being prepared to
4 work;

5 “(cc) following directions;

6 “(dd) working independ-
7 ently;

8 “(ee) working with others;

9 “(ff) working safely; and

10 “(gg) demonstrating a com-
11 mitment to produce high-quality
12 work;

13 “(II) development of job-specific
14 occupational skills and on-the-job
15 training;

16 “(III) stipended or paid work ex-
17 perience that provides participants
18 with insights into the professional
19 work environment;

20 “(IV) activities designed to lead
21 to—

22 “(aa) the attainment of an
23 industry-recognized certification
24 or credential; or

1 “(bb) meaningful employ-
2 ment in the economy of the 21st
3 century;

4 “(V) career counseling and job
5 search assistance; and

6 “(VI) provision of a job developer
7 to cultivate relationships with local
8 employers to hire program graduates;

9 “(iii) supportive services, which may
10 include—

11 “(I) needs-related payments;

12 “(II) health care, including men-
13 tal health care such as drug and alco-
14 hol abuse counseling;

15 “(III) child care; and

16 “(IV) transportation;

17 “(iv) provision of wages, stipends, or
18 benefits;

19 “(v) development and monitoring of
20 individual education and career plans;

21 “(vi) service and conservation
22 projects, designed to develop civic engage-
23 ment and environmental stewardship;

24 “(vii) supervision and training on
25 those projects; and

1 “(viii) adult mentoring;

2 “(B) shall use the funds made available
3 through the grant, in carrying out the Youth
4 Corps program, to provide followup services and
5 tracking for program graduates; and

6 “(C) may use the funds made available
7 through the grant for—

8 “(i) ongoing training and technical as-
9 sistance that is related to the development,
10 implementation, and sustainability of the
11 program; and

12 “(ii) payment of administrative ex-
13 penses.

14 “(4) APPLICATION.—

15 “(A) IN GENERAL.—In order to be quali-
16 fied to receive a grant for a program under this
17 subsection, an eligible entity shall submit an ap-
18 plication at such time, in such manner, and
19 containing such information as the Secretary
20 may require.

21 “(B) MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS.—The Sec-
22 retary shall require that the application contain,
23 at a minimum—

1 “(i) a request for the grant, specifying
2 the amount of the grant requested and the
3 proposed uses for the grant funds;

4 “(ii) a description of the applicant
5 and a statement of its qualifications, in-
6 cluding a description of the applicant’s—

7 “(I) past experience with youth
8 education and training programs; and

9 “(II) relationships with local
10 boards, one-stop operators and one-
11 stop partners, local labor organiza-
12 tions, entities carrying out registered
13 apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship
14 programs, employers, institutions of
15 higher education, and other commu-
16 nity-based organizations who are pro-
17 posed as members of the program
18 partnership;

19 “(iii) a description of the educational
20 and work readiness training activities (in-
21 cluding paid work opportunities), sec-
22 ondary education, preparation for and ac-
23 cess to postsecondary education and train-
24 ing opportunities, and other services that
25 will be provided to participants, and how

1 those activities, opportunities, and services
2 will prepare eligible youth for an outcome
3 described in subsection (b)(5)(A), and in-
4 still in them a sense of civic engagement
5 and environmental stewardship;

6 “(iv) a description of the proposed
7 service and conservation projects to be un-
8 dertaken under the grant, how the project
9 activities will improve the affected commu-
10 nity or environment, and the anticipated
11 schedule for carrying out such activities;

12 “(v) a description of the manner in
13 which eligible youth will be recruited and
14 selected as participants, including a de-
15 scription of any coordination with local
16 boards, one-stop operators and one-stop
17 partners, community-based organizations,
18 faith-based organizations, State edu-
19 cational agencies (as defined in section
20 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary
21 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801))
22 or local educational agencies (including
23 agencies of Indian tribes), public assistance
24 agencies, local courts, probation and parole
25 offices, the justice system, agencies serving

1 homeless youth, foster care agencies, the
2 Armed Forces, and other appropriate pub-
3 lic and private agencies;

4 “(vi) a description of how the pro-
5 posed program will be coordinated with
6 other Federal, State, and local activities
7 and activities conducted by Indian tribes,
8 such as local workforce investment activi-
9 ties, career and technical education pro-
10 grams, programs of adult education and
11 literary activities, activities conducted by
12 public schools, activities conducted by com-
13 munity colleges, national and community
14 service programs, and other non-school-
15 based education or training provided with
16 funds available under this title;

17 “(vii) a description of results to be
18 achieved with respect to performance indi-
19 cators described in subsection (e);

20 “(viii) a detailed budget and a de-
21 scription of the system of fiscal controls,
22 and auditing and accountability proce-
23 dures, that will be used to ensure fiscal
24 soundness for the proposed program; and

1 “(ix) a description of the commit-
2 ments of any additional resources (in addi-
3 tion to the grant funds) by the applicant
4 or any program partners.

5 “(5) SELECTION CRITERIA.—For an applicant
6 to be eligible to receive a grant under this sub-
7 section, the applicant and the applicant’s proposed
8 program shall meet such selection criteria as the
9 Secretary shall establish under this section, which
10 shall include criteria relating to—

11 “(A) the qualifications or potential capa-
12 bilities of an applicant;

13 “(B) an applicant’s potential for devel-
14 oping and implementing a successful education
15 and training program utilizing the Youth Corps
16 model;

17 “(C) the need for an applicant’s proposed
18 program, as determined by the degree of eco-
19 nomic distress of the community from which
20 participants would be recruited (measured by
21 indicators such as poverty, youth unemploy-
22 ment, and the number of individuals who have
23 dropped out of secondary school);

1 “(D) the need for the applicant’s proposed
2 service and conservation projects by the af-
3 fected community or environmental area;

4 “(E) the ability of an applicant to provide
5 the education, training, and other services de-
6 scribed in paragraph (3) that are necessary to
7 prepare participants for an outcome described
8 in subsection (b)(5)(A);

9 “(F) the extent of an applicant’s ability to
10 coordinate and partner with local boards, one-
11 stop operators and one-stop partners, local
12 labor organizations, entities carrying out reg-
13 istered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship
14 programs, employers, institutions of higher edu-
15 cation, and other community-based organiza-
16 tions who are proposed as members of the pro-
17 gram partnership to provide participants with
18 an outcome described in subsection (b)(5)(A);

19 “(G) the extent of the applicant’s coordina-
20 tion of activities with entities carrying out pub-
21 lic education, criminal justice, housing and com-
22 munity development, national and community
23 service, postsecondary education, or other sys-
24 tems that relate to the goals of the proposed
25 program;

1 “(H) the extent of the commitment of ad-
2 ditional resources (in addition to the grant
3 funds) to the proposed program by the appli-
4 cant or any program partners; and

5 “(I) such other factors as the Secretary
6 determines to be appropriate for purposes of
7 carrying out the proposed program in an effec-
8 tive and efficient manner.

9 “(d) ADDITIONAL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—

10 “(1) ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS.—

11 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding sec-
12 tion 101, for purposes of this section an indi-
13 vidual shall be eligible to participate in a Youth
14 Corps program only if such individual is—

15 “(i)(I) not less than age 16 and not
16 more than age 24, on the date of enroll-
17 ment; and

18 “(II)(aa) a low-income individual, a
19 youth in foster care (including youth aging
20 out of foster care), a formerly incarcerated
21 or court-involved youth, a child of an in-
22 carcerated parent, a youth who is an indi-
23 vidual with a disability, or a migrant
24 youth; or

25 “(bb) a school dropout; or

1 “(ii) eligible to participate under sub-
2 paragraph (B).

3 “(B) EXCEPTION FOR INDIVIDUALS NOT
4 MEETING INCOME OR EDUCATIONAL NEED RE-
5 QUIREMENTS.—Not more than 25 percent of
6 the individuals selected to be participants in
7 such program may be individuals who do not
8 meet the requirements of subclause (II) of sub-
9 paragraph (A)(i).

10 “(C) PARTICIPANTS.—For purposes of
11 Federal law, participants in a Youth Corps pro-
12 gram under this section shall be considered par-
13 ticipants of the program rather than employees
14 of the program.

15 “(2) PARTICIPATION LIMITATION.—An eligible
16 individual selected for participation in a Youth
17 Corps program under this section shall be offered
18 full-time participation in the program for a period of
19 not less than 6 months and not more than 24
20 months.

21 “(e) PERFORMANCE INDICATORS.—Recipients of
22 grants for programs under subsection (c) shall report an-
23 nually to the Secretary concerning the following perform-
24 ance indicators:

25 “(1) Program enrollment rates.

1 “(2) Program attendance rates.

2 “(3) Attainment of a diploma, equivalent, or
3 credential described in subsection (c)(3)(A)(i)(III).

4 “(4) Rates of program completion, including
5 early release for meaningful employment in the econ-
6 omy of the 21st century.

7 “(5) Rates of outcomes described in subsection
8 (b)(5)(A) for program graduates.

9 “(6) Wages of program graduates.

10 “(7) Post-program employment retention rates.

11 “(8) Such other performance indicators as may
12 be reasonably required by the Secretary.

13 “(f) MANAGEMENT AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—

14 “(1) SECRETARY ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary
15 may enter into contracts or cooperative agreements
16 with or make grants to 1 or more entities to provide
17 assistance to the Secretary in the management, su-
18 pervision, and coordination of the program carried
19 out under this section.

20 “(2) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—

21 “(A) CONTRACTS, COOPERATIVE AGREE-
22 MENTS, AND GRANTS.—The Secretary shall
23 enter into contracts or cooperative agreements
24 with or make grants to 1 or more qualified na-
25 tional nonprofit organizations with a dem-

1 onstrated record of experience with and achieve-
2 ment in developing and implementing the Youth
3 Corps model, in order to provide training, infor-
4 mation, and technical assistance to recipients of
5 grants under subsection (c).

6 “(B) RESERVATION OF FUNDS.—Of the
7 amounts available under section 172(g) to carry
8 out this section for a fiscal year, the Secretary
9 shall reserve 5 percent to carry out subpara-
10 graph (A).

11 “(3) EVALUATION.—

12 “(A) CONTRACTS, COOPERATIVE AGREE-
13 MENTS, AND GRANTS.—The Secretary shall
14 enter into contracts or cooperative agreements
15 with or make grants to 1 or more qualified na-
16 tional nonprofit organizations with a dem-
17 onstrated record of experience with and achieve-
18 ment in developing and implementing the Youth
19 Corps model, for the purpose of conducting
20 data collection and evaluation.

21 “(B) RESERVATION OF FUNDS.—Of the
22 amounts available under section 172(g) to carry
23 out this section for a fiscal year, the Secretary
24 shall reserve 1 percent to carry out subpara-
25 graph (A).

1 “(4) CAPACITY BUILDING GRANTS.—For each
 2 fiscal year, the Secretary may use not more than 3
 3 percent of the amounts available under section
 4 172(g) to award grants to 1 or more qualified na-
 5 tional nonprofit organizations to pay for the Federal
 6 share of the cost of providing capacity building ac-
 7 tivities for recipients of grants under subsection
 8 (c).”.

9 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents in
 10 section 1(b) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity
 11 Act is amended by inserting after the item relating to sec-
 12 tion 171 the following:

“Sec. 171A. Youth Corps programs.”.

13 **SEC. 4. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

14 Section 172 of the Workforce Innovation and Oppor-
 15 tunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3227) is amended by adding at the
 16 end the following:

17 “(g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
 18 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out section
 19 171A such sums as may be necessary for each of fiscal
 20 years 2022 through 2027.”.

○