

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2661

To prioritize educating and training for existing and new environmental health professionals.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 19, 2021

Mrs. LAWRENCE (for herself, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, and Mr. COHEN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Education and Labor, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To prioritize educating and training for existing and new environmental health professionals.

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 “Environmental Health
5 Workforce Act of 2021”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds as follows:

1 (1) The environmental health workforce is vital
2 to protecting the health and safety of the public.

3 (2) For years, State and local governmental
4 public health agencies have reported substantial
5 workforce losses and other challenges to the environ-
6 mental health workforce.

7 (3) According to the Association of State and
8 Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and the Na-
9 tional Association of County and City Health Offi-
10 cials (NACCHO), more than 50,600 State and local
11 environmental health workforce jobs have been lost
12 since 2008. This represents approximately 22 per-
13 cent of the total State and local environmental
14 health workforce.

15 (4) In the coming years, the retiring Baby
16 Boomer Generation will lead to a further decrease in
17 the environmental health workforce.

18 (5) According to the National Environmental
19 Health Association, more than 67 percent of Tribal
20 environmental health programs, 64 percent of State
21 environmental health programs, and 60 percent of
22 local environmental health programs report insuffi-
23 cient staffing capacity to respond to new issues pre-
24 sented by the COVID–19 pandemic. Industry work-

1 ers also reported insufficient access to training and
2 high levels of burnout.

3 (6) Currently, only 27 States require a creden-
4 tial for environmental health workers that is an im-
5 partial, third-party endorsement of an individual's
6 professional knowledge and experience.

7 (7) Educating and training existing and new
8 environmental health professionals should be a na-
9 tional public health goal.

10 **SEC. 3. MODEL STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR**
11 **CREDENTIALING ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**
12 **WORKERS.**

13 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the
14 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and
15 Human Services, in coordination with appropriate na-
16 tional professional organizations, Federal, State, local,
17 and tribal governmental agencies, and private-sector and
18 nongovernmental entities, shall develop model standards
19 and guidelines for credentialing environmental health
20 workers.

21 (b) PROVISION OF STANDARDS AND TECHNICAL AS-
22 SISTANCE.—The Secretary of Health and Human Services
23 shall provide to State, local, and tribal governments—

24 (1) the model standards and guidelines devel-
25 oped under subsection (a); and

1 (2) technical assistance in credentialing envi-
2 ronmental health workers.

3 **SEC. 4. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOP-**
4 **MENT PLAN.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—To ensure that programs and ac-
6 tivities (including education, training, and payment pro-
7 grams) of the Department of Health and Human Services
8 for developing the environmental health workforce meet
9 national needs, the Secretary of Health and Human Serv-
10 ices shall develop a comprehensive and coordinated plan
11 for such programs and activities that—

12 (1) includes performance measures to more
13 clearly determine the extent to which these programs
14 and activities are meeting the Department’s stra-
15 tegic goal of strengthening the environmental health
16 workforce;

17 (2) identifies and communicates to stakeholders
18 any gaps between existing programs and activities
19 and future environmental health workforce needs
20 identified in workforce projections of the Health Re-
21 sources and Services Administration;

22 (3) identifies actions needed to address such
23 identified gaps; and

1 (4) identifies any additional statutory authority
2 that is needed by the Department to implement such
3 identified actions.

4 (b) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 2
5 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Sec-
6 retary of Health and Human Services shall submit to the
7 Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of
8 the Senate, and to the Committees on Energy and Com-
9 merce and Education and Labor of the House of Rep-
10 resentatives, the plan developed under subsection (a).

11 **SEC. 5. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOP-**
12 **MENT REPORT.**

13 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 2 years after the
14 date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General
15 of the United States shall examine and identify best prac-
16 tices in 6 States (as described in subsection (b)) related
17 to training and credentialing requirements for environ-
18 mental health workers and submit to the Committee on
19 Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and
20 the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House
21 of Representatives a report that includes information con-
22 cerning—

23 (1) types of environmental health workers em-
24 ployed at State, local, and city health departments
25 and independent environmental health agencies;

1 (2) educational backgrounds of environmental
2 health workers;

3 (3) whether environmental health workers are
4 credentialed or registered, and what type of creden-
5 tial or registration each worker has received;

6 (4) State requirements for continuing education
7 for environmental health workers;

8 (5) whether State, local, and city health depart-
9 ments and independent environmental health agen-
10 cies track continuing education units for their envi-
11 ronmental health workers; and

12 (6) how frequently any exam required to qualify
13 environmental health workers is updated and re-
14 viewed to ensure that the exam is consistent with
15 current law.

16 (b) SELECTION OF STATES.—The report described in
17 subsection (a) shall be based upon the examination of such
18 best practices with respect to 3 States that have
19 credentialing requirements for environmental health work-
20 ers (such as Maryland, Ohio, and Washington) and 3
21 States that do not have such requirements (such as Indi-
22 ana, Iowa, and Pennsylvania).

23 **SEC. 6. PUBLIC SERVICE LOAN FORGIVENESS.**

24 Section 455(m) of the Higher Education Act of 1965
25 (20 U.S.C. 1087e(m)) is amended in paragraph (3)(B)—

1 (1) in clause (i), by striking “or” at the end;

2 (2) in clause (ii), by striking the period at the

3 end and inserting “; or”; and

4 (3) by adding at the end the following:

5 “(iii) a full-time job as an environ-

6 mental health worker (as defined in section

7 7 of the Environmental Health Workforce

8 Act of 2021) who is accredited, certified,

9 or licensed in accordance with applicable

10 law.”.

11 **SEC. 7. DEFINITION.**

12 In this Act, the terms “environmental health worker”

13 and “environmental health workforce” refer to public

14 health workers who investigate and assess hazardous envi-

15 ronmental agents in various environmental settings and

16 develop, promote, and enforce guidelines, policies, and

17 interventions to control such hazards.

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