

117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 5282

To establish a mental health program for Federal wildland firefighters, and  
for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 17, 2021

Mr. NEGUSE (for himself and Ms. PORTER) introduced the following bill;  
which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition  
to the Committee on Agriculture, 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

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## A BILL

To establish a mental health program for Federal wildland  
firefighters, 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 “Care for our Fire-  
5 fighters Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM FOR FEDERAL**  
7 **WILDLAND FIREFIGHTERS.**

8 (a) MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM.—Subject to the  
9 availability of appropriations, not later than 180 days

1 after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretaries  
2 of the Interior and Agriculture shall establish and carry  
3 out a program for Federal wildland firefighters for mental  
4 health awareness and support. Such program shall in-  
5 clude—

6 (1) a mental health awareness campaign;

7 (2) a mental health education and training pro-  
8 gram that includes an on-boarding curriculum;

9 (3) an extensive peer-to-peer mental health sup-  
10 port network for Federal wildland firefighters and  
11 their immediate family;

12 (4) expanding the Critical Incident Stress Man-  
13 agement Program through training, developing, and  
14 retaining a larger pool of qualified mental health  
15 professionals who are familiar with the experiences  
16 of the wildland firefighting workforce, and moni-  
17 toring and tracking mental health in the profession  
18 to better understand the scope of the issue and de-  
19 velop strategies to assist; and

20 (5) establish and carry out a new and distinct  
21 mental health support service specific to Federal  
22 wildland firefighters and their immediate family,  
23 with culturally relevant and trauma-informed mental  
24 health professionals who are readily available and

1 not subject to any limit on the number of sessions  
2 or service provided.

3 (b) MENTAL HEALTH LEAVE.—Each Federal  
4 wildland firefighter shall be entitled to 7 consecutive days  
5 of leave, without loss or reduction in pay, during each cal-  
6 endar year for the purposes of maintaining mental health.  
7 Such leave may only be taken during the period beginning  
8 on June 1 and ending on October 31 of any such year.  
9 If leave is not taken under this section it expires after  
10 October 31 of the calendar year.

11 (c) FEDERAL WILDLAND FIREFIGHTER DEFINED.—  
12 In this Act, the term “Federal wildland firefighter” means  
13 any temporary, seasonal, or permanent position at the De-  
14 partment of Agriculture or the Department of Interior  
15 that maintains group, emergency incident management, or  
16 fire qualifications and primarily engages in or supports  
17 wildland fire management activities, including forestry  
18 and rangeland technicians and positions concerning avia-  
19 tion, fire heavy equipment operations, emergency dispatch  
20 communication services, or fire and fuels management.

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