

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4159

To amend the Public Health Service Act to encourage qualified individuals to enter the forensic pathology workforce, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 18, 2024

Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Mr. MURPHY) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To amend the Public Health Service Act to encourage qualified individuals to enter the forensic pathology workforce, 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 “Strengthening the
5 Medical Examiner and Coroner System Act of 2024”.

6 **SEC. 2. FORENSIC MEDICAL NEEDS.**

7 Part E of title VII of the Public Health Service Act
8 (42 U.S.C. 294n et seq.) is amended by adding at the end
9 the following:

1 **“Subpart 4—Forensic Pathology Workforce**

2 **“SEC. 779. GRANTS TO ADDRESS THE FORENSIC MEDICINE**
3 **SERVICE PROVIDER SHORTAGE.**

4 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

5 “(1) FORENSIC MEDICINE SERVICE PRO-
6 VIDER.—The term ‘forensic medicine service pro-
7 vider’ has the meaning given the term in section 6
8 of Billy’s Law (34 U.S.C. 40506 note; Public Law
9 117–327).

10 “(2) MEDICOLEGAL DEATH INVESTIGATOR.—
11 The term ‘medicolegal death investigator’ means an
12 individual who performs formal inquiry into the cir-
13 cumstances surrounding the death of a human being
14 to assist in the determination of the cause and man-
15 ner of death.

16 “(3) SECRETARY.—The term ‘Secretary’ means
17 the Secretary, acting through the Collaborating Of-
18 fice of Medical Examiners and Coroners of the Cen-
19 ters for Disease Control and Prevention.

20 “(b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this section are—

21 “(1) to encourage and incentivize qualified med-
22 ical school graduates to enter the practice of forensic
23 pathology by supporting forensic pathology fellow-
24 ships;

25 “(2) to encourage and incentivize qualified indi-
26 viduals to enter the field of medicolegal death inves-

1 tigation to conduct death investigations in support
2 of forensic medicine service providers; and

3 “(3) to support qualified individuals who enter
4 the field of forensic toxicology through employment
5 in forensic toxicology laboratories in the acquisition
6 of skills in pharmacology, advanced and emerging
7 toxicological methods, and instrumentation needed to
8 assist with the interpretation of toxicological find-
9 ings.

10 “(c) GRANTS.—The Secretary shall award grants to
11 eligible entities described in subsection (d) to assist such
12 entities in addressing their shortages by offering the train-
13 ing and fellowships described in subsection (e)(1).

14 “(d) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible to receive a grant
15 under this section, an entity shall be—

16 “(1) a graduate medical education program—

17 “(A) accredited by the Accreditation Coun-
18 cil for Graduate Medical Education that offers
19 a forensic pathology fellowship that is so ac-
20 credited; or

21 “(B) that is seeking such accreditation for
22 a forensic pathology fellowship;

23 “(2) a publicly funded medical examiner or cor-
24 oner office that is accredited or seeking accredita-
25 tion; or

1 “(3) a publicly funded forensic toxicology lab-
2 oratory that supports medical examiner and coroner
3 offices and that is accredited or seeking accredita-
4 tion.

5 “(e) USE OF GRANT FUNDS.—

6 “(1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity that re-
7 ceives a grant under this section shall use the grant
8 funds—

9 “(A) to provide payment to individuals se-
10 lected by such entity for a forensic pathology
11 fellowship for salary, fringe benefits, related
12 supply expenses, and other educational expenses
13 of such individuals;

14 “(B) provide training for medicolegal death
15 investigators, including paying for the costs of
16 continuing education for medicolegal death in-
17 vestigators for purposes of such individuals—

18 “(i) becoming certified by the Amer-
19 ican Board of Medicolegal Death Investiga-
20 tion (or another accredited certifying orga-
21 nization); and

22 “(ii) maintaining such certification; or

23 “(C) to assist eligible entities—

1 “(i) in providing the education and
2 training to individuals employed by such
3 entities necessary—

4 “(I) to gain initial competency,
5 additional training, and continuing
6 education in pharmacology and ad-
7 vanced and emerging toxicological
8 methods and instrumentation needed
9 to assist with the interpretation of
10 toxicological findings;

11 “(II) to become certified by the
12 American Board of Forensic Toxi-
13 cology, the American Association of
14 Clinical Chemistry, or another accred-
15 ited certifying organization; or

16 “(III) to maintain such certifi-
17 cation or to obtain recertification by
18 such a certifying organization; or

19 “(ii) in obtaining accreditation by the
20 Accreditation Council for Graduate Med-
21 ical Education for forensic pathology fel-
22 lowships.

23 “(2) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—An eligible enti-
24 ty that receives a grant under this section may use
25 not more than 15 percent of the total amount of the

1 grant for administrative expenses, including grant
2 management services.

3 “(f) RECIPIENT REQUIREMENTS.—To be eligible to
4 receive a fellowship funded by a grant under this section,
5 an individual shall—

6 “(1)(A) be enrolled in, or shall have completed,
7 an anatomical pathology or anatomical and clinical
8 pathology residency program accredited by the Ac-
9 creditation Council for Graduate Medical Education;
10 and

11 “(B) not be, and shall never have been, in de-
12 fault on any public or private student loan;

13 “(2)(A) be an individual who has completed a
14 program of baccalaureate or postbaccalaureate edu-
15 cation and earned a degree, or completed a con-
16 centration, in forensic science, natural science, an-
17 thropology, nursing, or other medical and forensic-
18 related fields; and

19 “(B) be a coroner or medicolegal death investi-
20 gator working full-time at, or in a contractual rela-
21 tionship with, a publicly funded medical examiner or
22 coroner office who—

23 “(i) has not achieved, and is seeking, cer-
24 tification by an accredited certification organi-
25 zation described in subsection (e)(1)(B)(i); or

1 “(ii) who is seeking continuing education
2 for purposes of maintaining such certification;

3 “(3)(A) have completed a program of bacca-
4 laureate or postbaccalaureate education and earned
5 a degree, or completed a concentration, in forensic
6 science or physical or natural sciences, with a chem-
7 istry, toxicology, or other closely related scientific or
8 forensic component; and

9 “(B) be employed by the eligible entity as a tox-
10 icologist or pharmacologist.

11 “(g) TAX WAIVER.—The payment amounts to an in-
12 dividual under this section or any other benefit received
13 by the individual from the grant recipient shall not be tax-
14 able to the individual.

15 “(h) GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION.—In awarding
16 grants under this section, the Secretary shall take into
17 consideration—

18 “(1) the geographic distribution of grant fund-
19 ing among the States;

20 “(2) the relative proportion of grant funding
21 between rural and urban areas; and

22 “(3) the unique needs of rural communities, in-
23 cluding—

1 “(A) communities with an incidence of in-
2 dividuals with opioid use disorder that is above
3 the national average; and

4 “(B) communities with a shortage of fo-
5 rensic medicine service providers.

6 “(i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

7 “(1) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be
8 appropriated to the Secretary to carry out this sec-
9 tion \$13,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2025
10 through 2029.

11 “(2) ALLOCATIONS.—Of the amounts made
12 available each fiscal year under paragraph (1), the
13 Secretary shall allocate—

14 “(A) subject to paragraph (3), not less
15 than \$7,000,000 for grants to eligible entities
16 carrying out the purpose described in sub-
17 section (e)(1)(A);

18 “(B) not less than \$3,000,000 for grants
19 to eligible entities carrying out the purpose de-
20 scribed in subsection (e)(1)(B); and

21 “(C) not less than \$3,000,000 for grants
22 to eligible entities carrying out the purpose de-
23 scribed in subsection (e)(1)(C).

24 “(3) FELLOWSHIP MINIMUM.—In allocating
25 amounts for grants to eligible entities carrying out

1 the purpose described in subsection (e)(1)(A), the
2 Secretary shall award sufficient grant funding to
3 such entities to ensure that not fewer than 40 foren-
4 sic pathology fellowships are funded.”.

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