

**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE  
TO H.R. 3974  
OFFERED BY MS. KUSTER OF NEW HAMPSHIRE**

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

**1 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2       This Act may be cited as the “Grow Our Own Direc-  
3 tive: Physician Assistant Employment and Education Act  
4 of 2016”.

**5 SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL AS-  
6                                   SISTANCE TO PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS TO BE  
7                                   EMPLOYED AT THE DEPARTMENT OF VET-  
8                                   ERANS AFFAIRS.**

9       (a) PILOT PROGRAM.—

10           (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans  
11       Affairs shall carry out a pilot program to be known  
12       as the “Grow Our Own Directive” or “G.O.O.D.”  
13       pilot program (in this section referred to as the  
14       “pilot program”) to provide educational assistance  
15       to certain former members of the Armed Forces for  
16       education and training as physician assistants of the  
17       Department of Veterans Affairs.

1           (2) INFORMATION ON PILOT PROGRAM.—The  
2       Secretary shall provide information on the pilot pro-  
3       gram to eligible individuals under subsection (b), in-  
4       cluding information on application requirements and  
5       a list of entities with which the Secretary has  
6       partnered under subsection (g).

7       (b) ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS.—An individual is eligi-  
8       ble to participate in the pilot program if the individual—

9           (1) has medical or military health experience  
10       gained while serving as a member of the Armed  
11       Forces;

12          (2) has received a certificate, associate degree,  
13       baccalaureate degree, master's degree, or  
14       postbaccalaureate training in a science relating to  
15       health care;

16          (3) has participated in the delivery of health  
17       care services or related medical services, including  
18       participation in military training relating to the  
19       identification, evaluation, treatment, and prevention  
20       of diseases and disorders; and

21          (4) does not have a degree of doctor of medi-  
22       cine, doctor of osteopathy, or doctor of dentistry.

23       (c) DURATION.—The pilot program shall be carried  
24       out during the five-year period beginning on the date that  
25       is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

1 (d) SELECTION.—

2 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall select  
3 not less than 250 eligible individuals under sub-  
4 section (b) to participate in the pilot program.

5 (2) PRIORITY FOR SELECTION.—In selecting in-  
6 dividuals to participate in the pilot program under  
7 paragraph (1), the Secretary shall give priority to  
8 the following individuals:

9 (A) Individuals who participated in the In-  
10 termediate Care Technician Pilot Program of  
11 the Department that was carried out by the  
12 Secretary between January 2011 and February  
13 2015.

14 (B) Individuals who agree to be employed  
15 as a physician assistant for the Veterans Health  
16 Administration at a medical facility of the De-  
17 partment located in a community that—

18 (i) is designated as a medically under-  
19 served population under section  
20 330(b)(3)(A) of the Public Health Service  
21 Act (42 U.S.C. 254b(b)(3)(A)); and

22 (ii) is in a State with a per capita  
23 population of veterans of more than 9 per-  
24 cent according to the National Center for

1                   Veterans Analysis and Statistics and the  
2                   United States Census Bureau.

3           (e) EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.—

4                   (1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the pilot  
5           program, the Secretary shall provide educational as-  
6           sistance to individuals participating in the pilot pro-  
7           gram, including through the use of scholarships, to  
8           cover the costs to such individuals of obtaining a  
9           master's degree in physician assistant studies or a  
10          similar master's degree.

11                   (2) USE OF EXISTING PROGRAMS.—In pro-  
12          viding educational assistance under paragraph (1),  
13          the Secretary shall use the Department of Veterans  
14          Affairs Health Professionals Educational Assistance  
15          Program under chapter 76 of title 38, United States  
16          Code, and such other educational assistance pro-  
17          grams of the Department as the Secretary considers  
18          appropriate.

19                   (3) USE OF SCHOLARSHIPS.—The Secretary  
20          shall provide not less than 35 scholarships under the  
21          pilot program to individuals participating in the pilot  
22          program during each year in which the pilot pro-  
23          gram is carried out.

24          (f) PERIOD OF OBLIGATED SERVICE.—

1           (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall enter  
2           into an agreement with each individual participating  
3           in the pilot program in which such individual agrees  
4           to be employed as a physician assistant for the Vet-  
5           erans Health Administration for a period of obli-  
6           gated service specified in paragraph (2).

7           (2) PERIOD SPECIFIED.—With respect to each  
8           individual participating in the pilot program, the pe-  
9           riod of obligated service specified in this paragraph  
10          for the individual is—

11                 (A) if the individual is participating in the  
12                 pilot program through a program described in  
13                 subsection (e)(2) that specifies a period of obli-  
14                 gated service, the period specified with respect  
15                 to such program; or

16                 (B) if the individual is participating in the  
17                 pilot program other than through a program  
18                 described in such subsection, or if such program  
19                 does not specify a period of obligated service, a  
20                 period of three years or such other period as  
21                 the Secretary considers appropriate for pur-  
22                 poses of the pilot program.

23          (g) BREACH.—

24                 (1) LIABILITY.—Except as provided in para-  
25                 graph (2), an individual who participates in the pilot

1 program and fails to satisfy the period of obligated  
2 service under subsection (f) shall be liable to the  
3 United States, in lieu of such obligated service, for  
4 the amount that has been paid or is payable to or  
5 on behalf of the individual under the pilot program,  
6 reduced by the proportion that the number of days  
7 served for completion of the period of obligated serv-  
8 ice bears to the total number of days in the period  
9 of obligated service of such individual.

10 (2) EXCEPTION.—If an individual is partici-  
11 pating in the pilot program through a program de-  
12 scribed in subsection (e)(2) that specifies a period of  
13 obligated service, the liability of the individual for  
14 failing to satisfy the period of obligated service  
15 under subsection (f) shall be determined as specified  
16 with respect to such program.

17 (h) MENTORS.—The Secretary shall ensure that a  
18 physician assistant mentor or mentors are available for in-  
19 dividuals participating in the pilot program at each facility  
20 of the Veterans Health Administration at which a partici-  
21 pant in the pilot program is employed.

22 (i) PARTNERSHIPS.—In carrying out the pilot pro-  
23 gram, the Secretary shall seek to partner with the fol-  
24 lowing:

1           (1) Not less than 15 institutions of higher edu-  
2           cation that—

3                   (A) offer a master's degree program in  
4                   physician assistant studies or a similar area of  
5                   study that is accredited by the Accreditation  
6                   Review Commission on Education for the Phy-  
7                   sician Assistant; and

8                   (B) agree—

9                           (i) to guarantee seats in such master's  
10                           degree program for individuals partici-  
11                           pating in the pilot program who meet the  
12                           entrance requirements for such master's  
13                           degree program; and

14                           (ii) to provide individuals partici-  
15                           pating in the pilot program with informa-  
16                           tion on admissions criteria and the admis-  
17                           sions process.

18           (2) Other institutions of higher education that  
19           offer programs in physician assistant studies or  
20           other similar areas of studies that are accredited by  
21           the Accreditation Review Commission on Education  
22           for the Physician Assistant.

23           (3) The Transition Assistance Program of the  
24           Department of Defense.

1           (4) The Veterans' Employment and Training  
2           Service of the Department of Labor.

3           (5) Programs carried out under chapter 41 of  
4           title 38, United States Code, for the purpose of mar-  
5           keting and advertising the pilot program to veterans  
6           and members of the Armed Forces who may be in-  
7           terested in the pilot program.

8           (j) ADMINISTRATION OF PILOT PROGRAM.—For pur-  
9           poses of carrying out the pilot program, the Secretary  
10          shall appoint or select within the Office of Physician As-  
11          sistant Services of the Veterans Health Administration the  
12          following:

13           (1) A Deputy Director for Education and Ca-  
14          reer Development of Physician Assistants who—

15                   (A) is a physician assistant, a veteran, and  
16                   employed by the Department as of the date of  
17                   the enactment of this Act;

18                   (B) is responsible for—

19                           (i) overseeing the pilot program;

20                           (ii) recruiting candidates to partici-  
21                           pate in the pilot program;

22                           (iii) coordinating with individuals par-  
23                           ticipating in the pilot program and assist-  
24                           ing those individuals in applying and being



1 admitted to a master's degree program  
2 under the pilot program; and

3 (iv) providing information to eligible  
4 individuals under subsection (b) with re-  
5 spect to the pilot program; and

6 (C) may be employed in the field at a med-  
7 ical center of the Department.

8 (2) A Deputy Director of Recruitment and Re-  
9 tention who—

10 (A) is a physician assistant, a veteran, and  
11 employed by the Department as of the date of  
12 the enactment of this Act;

13 (B) is responsible for—

14 (i) identifying and coordinating the  
15 needs of the pilot program and assist the  
16 Secretary in providing mentors under sub-  
17 section (h) to participants in the pilot pro-  
18 gram; and

19 (ii) coordinating the staff of facilities  
20 of the Veterans Health Administration  
21 with respect to identifying employment po-  
22 sitions and mentors under subsection (h)  
23 for participants in the pilot program; and

24 (C) may be employed in the field at a med-  
25 ical center of the Department.

1 (3) A recruiter who—

2 (A) reports directly to the Deputy Director  
3 of Recruitment and Retention; and

4 (B) works with the Workforce Manage-  
5 ment and Consulting Office and the Healthcare  
6 Talent Management Office of the Veterans  
7 Health Administration to develop and imple-  
8 ment national recruiting strategic plans for the  
9 recruitment and retention of physician assist-  
10 ants within the Department.

11 (4) An administrative assistant, compensated at  
12 a rate not less than level GS-6 of the General  
13 Schedule, or equivalent, who assists with administra-  
14 tive duties relating to the pilot program in the Office  
15 of Physician Assistant Services and such other du-  
16 ties as determined by the Secretary to ensure that  
17 the Office runs effectively and efficiently.

18 (k) REPORT.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year  
20 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-  
21 retary of Veterans Affairs, in collaboration with the  
22 Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of Defense, and  
23 the Secretary of Health and Human Services, shall  
24 submit to Congress a report on the pilot program.

1           (2) ELEMENTS.—The report required by para-  
2 graph (1) shall include the following:

3           (A) The extent to which the pilot program  
4 is effective in improving the ability of eligible  
5 individuals under subsection (b) to become phy-  
6 sician assistants;

7           (B) An examination of whether the pilot  
8 program is achieving the goals of—

9           (i) enabling individuals to build on  
10 medical skills gained as members of the  
11 Armed Forces by entering into the physi-  
12 cian assistant workforce of the Depart-  
13 ment; and

14           (ii) helping to meet the shortage of  
15 physician assistants employed by the De-  
16 partment.

17           (C) An identification of such modifications  
18 to the pilot program as the Secretary of Vet-  
19 erans Affairs, the Secretary of Labor, the Sec-  
20 retary of Defense, and the Secretary of Health  
21 and Human Services consider necessary to meet  
22 the goals described in subparagraph (B).

23           (D) An assessment of whether the pilot  
24 program could serve as a model for other pro-  
25 grams of the Department to assist individuals

1           in obtaining certification and employment in  
2           other health care fields.

Amend the title so as to read: “A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to provide educational assistance to certain former members of the Armed Forces for education and training as physician assistants of the Department of Veterans Affairs.”.

