

## Union Calendar No.

115<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS  
2<sup>D</sup> SESSION

# H. R. 4635

[Report No. 115-]

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase the number of peer-to-peer counselors providing counseling for women veterans, and for other purposes.

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### IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 13, 2017

Mr. COFFMAN (for himself and Ms. ESTY of Connecticut) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

MAY --, 2018

Reported with an amendment, committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, and ordered to be printed

[Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in *italie*]

[For text of introduced bill, see copy of bill as introduced on December 13, 2017]

## **A BILL**

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase the number of peer-to-peer counselors providing counseling for women veterans, 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. PEER SUPPORT COUNSELING PROGRAM FOR**  
4 **WOMEN VETERANS.**

5 *(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1720F(j) of title 38, United*  
6 *States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following*  
7 *new paragraph:*

8 *“(4)(A) As part of the counseling program under this*  
9 *subsection, the Secretary shall emphasize appointing peer*  
10 *support counselors for women veterans. To the degree prac-*  
11 *ticable, the Secretary shall seek to recruit women peer sup-*  
12 *port counselors with expertise in—*

13 *“(i) female gender-specific issues and services;*

14 *“(ii) the provision of information about services*  
15 *and benefits provided under laws administered by the*  
16 *Secretary; or*

17 *“(iii) employment mentoring.*

18 *“(B) To the degree practicable, the Secretary shall em-*  
19 *phasize facilitating peer support counseling for women vet-*  
20 *erans who are eligible for counseling and services under sec-*  
21 *tion 1720D of this title, have post-traumatic stress disorder*  
22 *or suffer from another mental health condition, are homeless*  
23 *or at risk of becoming homeless, or are otherwise at in-*  
24 *creased risk of suicide, as determined by the Secretary.*

1           “(C) *The Secretary shall conduct outreach to inform*  
2 *women veterans about the program and the assistance*  
3 *available under this paragraph.*

4           “(D) *In carrying out this paragraph, the Secretary*  
5 *shall coordinate with such community organizations, State*  
6 *and local governments, institutions of higher education,*  
7 *chambers of commerce, local business organizations, organi-*  
8 *zations that provide legal assistance, and other organiza-*  
9 *tions as the Secretary considers appropriate.*

10          “(E) *In carrying out this paragraph, the Secretary*  
11 *shall provide adequate training for peer support counselors,*  
12 *including training carried out under the national program*  
13 *of training required by section 304(c) of the Caregivers and*  
14 *Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 (38 U.S.C.*  
15 *1712A note).”.*

16          (b) *FUNDING.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall*  
17 *carry out paragraph (4) of section 1720F(j) of title 38,*  
18 *United States Code, as added by subsection (a), using funds*  
19 *otherwise made available to the Secretary. No additional*  
20 *funds are authorized to be appropriated by reason of such*  
21 *paragraph.*

22          (c) *REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than two years*  
23 *after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary*  
24 *of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Vet-*  
25 *erans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives*

1 *a report on the peer support counseling program under sec-*  
2 *tion 1720F(j) of title 38, United States Code, as amended*  
3 *by this section. Such report shall include—*

4 *(1) the number of peer support counselors in the*  
5 *program;*

6 *(2) an assessment of the effectiveness of the pro-*  
7 *gram; and*

8 *(3) a description of the oversight of the program.*