To require the Secretary of Homeland Security to issue a strategy to improve hiring and retention of U.S. Customs and Border Protection personnel in rural or remote areas, and for other purposes

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. TORRES SMALL of New Mexico introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on ____________________

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Homeland Security to issue a strategy to improve hiring and retention of U.S. Customs and Border Protection personnel in rural or remote areas, and for other purposes

1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

2 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

3 This Act may be cited as the “U.S. Customs and Border Protection Rural and Remote Hiring and Retention Strategy Act of 2019”.

SEC. 2. STRATEGY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Homeland Security, acting through the Chief Human Capital Officer of the Department of Homeland Security and the Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, shall issue a strategy and implementation plan, including benchmarks, to improve the hiring and retention of individuals by the Commissioner in rural or remote areas.

(b) CONSIDERATIONS.—The strategy required under subsection (a) shall take into consideration the following:

(1) Feedback from individuals who are U.S. Customs and Border Protection candidates or new hires at locations in rural or remote areas, including feedback on the quality of life in such areas for new hires and their families.

(2) Feedback from U.S. Customs and Border Protection personnel, other than new hires, who are stationed at locations in rural or remote areas, including feedback on the quality of life in such areas for such personnel and their families.

(3) An assessment of existing Federal programs, including financial incentives and other compensation-based flexibilities, regarding how to most effectively aid spouses and families of individuals
who are candidates or new hires in a rural or remote area.

(4) An assessment of Department of Homeland Security internship programs and the usefulness of such programs in improving hiring by the Secretary of Homeland Security in rural or remote areas.

(e) PLAN.—The implementation plan required under subsection (a) shall—

(1) include a pilot or other program, as appropriate, to address hiring challenges faced by U.S. Customs and Border Protection in rural or remote areas; and

(2) enhance strategic recruiting efforts of U.S. Customs and Border Protection through relationships with institutions of higher education (as such term is defined in section 102 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002)), veterans transition and employment centers, and job placement program in regions that could assist in filling positions in rural or remote areas.

(d) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Beginning on the date that is one year after the date of issuance of the strategy and implementation plan required under subsection (a) and for four years thereafter, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall report to the Committee on Homeland Secu-
rity of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate on the extent to which such strategy and implementation plan has improved the hiring and retention by U.S. Customs and Border Protection of employees in rural or remote areas.

(e) RURAL OR REMOTE AREAS DEFINED.—For purposes of this section, the term “rural or remote areas” means areas within the United States that are not within an area defined and designated as urbanized areas by the Bureau of the Census in the most recently completed decennial census.