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(Original Signature of Member)

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R.

To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs an Office of Food Insecurity, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

M. _____ introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs an Office of Food Insecurity, 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. ESTABLISHMENT OF DEPARTMENT OF VET-**
4 **ERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE OF FOOD INSECU-**
5 **RITY.**

6 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 3 of title 38, United
7 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
8 lowing new section:

1 **“§ 324. Office of Food Insecurity**

2 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is in the Department
3 an office to be known as the ‘Office of Food Insecurity’.
4 There is at the head of the Office a Director, who shall
5 be a career appointee in the Senior Executive Service.

6 “(b) RESPONSIBILITIES.—(1) The Director of the Of-
7 fice of Food Insecurity shall carry out the following re-
8 sponsibilities:

9 “(A) To provide information to veterans con-
10 cerning the availability of, and eligibility require-
11 ments for Federal nutrition assistance programs.

12 “(B) To collaborate with other program offices
13 of the Department, including the Homeless Pro-
14 grams Office, to develop and implement policies and
15 procedures to identify and treat veterans at-risk or
16 experiencing food insecurity.

17 “(C) To collaborate with the Secretary of Agri-
18 culture and the Secretary of Defense on food insecu-
19 rity among veterans, including by collaborating with
20 the Secretaries to develop materials related to food
21 insecurity for the Transition Assistance Program
22 curriculum and other transition-related resources.

23 “(D) To develop and provide training, including
24 training that may count towards continuing edu-
25 cation or licensure requirements, for social workers,
26 dietitians, chaplains, and other clinicians on how to

1 assist veterans with enrollment in Federal nutrition
2 assistance programs, including the supplemental nu-
3 trition assistance program under the Food and Nu-
4 trition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.) and the
5 special supplemental nutrition program for women,
6 infants, and children established by section 17 of the
7 Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786).

8 “(E) To issue guidance to Department medical
9 centers on how to collaborate with their State and
10 local offices administering the supplemental nutri-
11 tion assistance program under the Food and Nutri-
12 tion Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.).

13 “(2) In carrying out the responsibilities under para-
14 graph (1), the Director shall consult with and provide
15 technical assistance to the heads of other Federal depart-
16 ments and agencies, including the Department of Agri-
17 culture, Department of Defense, and Department of
18 Labor.

19 “(c) ANNUAL REPORT ON FOOD INSECURITY.—The
20 Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the
21 Secretary of Agriculture, shall submit to the Committees
22 on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Rep-
23 resentatives an annual report on veteran food insecurity.”.

1 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
2 at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding
3 at the end the following new item:

“324. Office of Food Insecurity.”.

4 (c) PILOT PROGRAM.—

5 (1) AUTHORITY.—The Secretary of Veterans
6 Affairs, acting through the Director of the Office of
7 Food Insecurity, shall carry out a pilot program
8 under which the Secretary shall—

9 (A) make grants to eligible entities for the
10 purpose of supporting partnerships that address
11 food insecurity among veterans and family
12 members of veterans, including veterans who re-
13 ceive services through Vet Centers or other fa-
14 cilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs
15 as determined by the Secretary; and

16 (B) make grants to eligible entities for the
17 purpose of supporting partnerships that address
18 food insecurity among veterans who have re-
19 cently transitioned from serving as members of
20 the Armed Forces to civilian life, and the family
21 members of such members.

22 (2) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—In this paragraph,
23 the term “eligible entity” means—

24 (A) a nonprofit organization;

25 (B) a veterans service organization;

- 1 (C) a public agency;
- 2 (D) an Indian Tribe or Tribal organiza-
- 3 tion;
- 4 (E) a community-based organization; or
- 5 (F) an institution of higher education.

6 (3) DISTRIBUTION OF GRANTS.—

7 (A) GENERAL GRANTS.—In making grants
8 under paragraph (1)(A), the Secretary shall
9 award at least one grant to at least one eligible
10 entity in each State, if the Secretary determines
11 that there is such an entity in a State that has
12 applied for, and meets requirements for the
13 award of, such a grant. The Secretary may
14 award not more than five additional grants
15 under subsection (a)(1) to eligible entities that
16 principally serve Native Americans.

17 (B) TRANSITION GRANTS.—The Secretary
18 shall award at least one grant under paragraph
19 (1)(B) in five different geographic areas that
20 the Secretary determines have a high rate of in-
21 dividuals described in such paragraph.

22 (4) USE OF FUNDS.—Any grant awarded under
23 this subsection—

24 (A) shall be used to either or both—

1 (i) increase access to and enrollment
2 in Federal assistance programs, including
3 the supplemental nutrition assistance pro-
4 gram under the Food and Nutrition Act of
5 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.), the special
6 supplemental nutrition program for
7 women, infants, and children established
8 by section 17 of the Child Nutrition Act of
9 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786), and the low-in-
10 come home energy assistance program es-
11 tablished under the Low-Income Home En-
12 ergy Assistance Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C.
13 8621 et seq.), and any other assistance
14 program that the Secretary determines ad-
15 visable; and

16 (ii) increase participation in nutrition
17 counseling programs and provide edu-
18 cational materials and counseling to vet-
19 erans and family members of veterans to
20 address food insecurity and healthy diets
21 among those individuals; and

22 (B) in addition to carrying out either or
23 both of the activities under subparagraph (A),
24 may be used to provide direct food assistance to
25 covered individuals, or otherwise to provide as-

1 sistance to covered individuals in accessing
2 food.

3 (5) APPLICATION REQUIREMENT.—An eligible
4 entity seeking a grant under this paragraph shall
5 submit to the Secretary an application therefor at
6 such time, in such manner, and containing such in-
7 formation as the Secretary may require.

8 (6) SELECTION OF RECIPIENTS.—The Sec-
9 retary shall select eligible entities that submit appli-
10 cations under paragraph (5) for the award of grants
11 using a competitive process that takes into account
12 the following:

13 (A) Capacity of the applicant entity to
14 serve covered individuals.

15 (B) Demonstrated need of the population
16 the applicant entity would serve.

17 (C) Demonstrated need of the applicant
18 entity for assistance from the grants.

19 (D) Capacity of the applicant entity to
20 serve covered individuals from underserved or
21 disadvantaged populations.

22 (E) Such other criteria as the Secretary
23 considers appropriate.

24 (7) DURATION.—The Secretary shall carry out
25 this subsection for a five-year period.

1 (8) AMOUNTS.—

2 (A) GENERAL GRANTS.—Each grant
3 awarded under subparagraph (A) of paragraph
4 (1) may not exceed \$150,000 per year.

5 (B) TRANSITION GRANTS.—Each grant
6 awarded under subparagraph (B) of paragraph
7 (1) may not exceed \$75,000 per year.

8 (9) MULTIPLE GRANTS.—The Secretary may
9 award grants to an eligible entity under both sub-
10 paragraphs (A) and (B) of paragraph (1).

11 (10) INFORMATION.—The Secretary shall col-
12 lect such information from eligible entities that re-
13 ceive a grant under this subsection as the Secretary
14 determines appropriate to monitor and evaluate the
15 use of grants, including data regarding the results
16 or outcomes of the services provided to covered indi-
17 viduals under the grant. Such information shall be
18 furnished in such form and manner as the Secretary
19 may specify.

20 (11) ANNUAL REPORT.—During the life of the
21 pilot program under this subsection, the Secretary
22 shall include in the annual report under section
23 324(c) of title 38, United States Code, as added by
24 subsection (a), a study on the effectiveness of the
25 grants made under the pilot program, broken down

1 by grants awarded under subparagraphs (A) and
2 (B) of paragraph (1), respectively. With respect to
3 grants awarded under such subparagraph (B), such
4 study shall—

5 (A) measure the need for food assistance
6 by individuals described in such subparagraph
7 (B); and

8 (B) include a description of how improving
9 access to food during the period in which an in-
10 dividual transitions from service in the armed
11 forces to civilian life affects the outcomes of the
12 individual and the family of the individual.

13 (12) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

14 (A) The term “covered individual” means
15 any veteran or family member described in sub-
16 paragraph (A) or (B) of paragraph (1).

17 (B) The term “Indian Tribe” has the
18 meaning given such term in section 4 of the In-
19 dian Self-Determination and Education Assist-
20 ance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

21 (C) The term “Native American” has the
22 meaning given that term in section 3765 of title
23 38, United States Code.

24 (D) The term “State” means each of the
25 several States, Territories, and possessions of

1 the United States, the District of Columbia,
2 and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.