

*Pathways to Health Careers Act (H.R. 5370)*

Congressman Danny K. Davis (D-IL)

Original Co-sponsors: Reps Richard E. Neal, Lloyd Doggett, Mike Thompson, John B. Larson, Terri A. Sewell, Judy Chu, Gwen Moore, Brendan Boyle, Dwight Evans, Bradley Schneider, Jimmy Panetta, Steven Horsford, Jimmy Gomez, Stacey E. Plaskett, Thomas Suozzi

**Section by Section Summary**

**Section 1. Short title.**

Designates the short title as the *Pathways to Health Careers Act*.

**Section 2. Career Pathways Through Health Profession Opportunity Grants.**

Authorizes and increases funding for new Health Profession Opportunity Grant (HPOG)

Program demonstration grants and provides for HPOG competitive grants in states, the District of Columbia, tribal communities, and all five U.S. territories. The grants include the following:

**Application requirements.** Requires grant applications to include:

- Descriptions of how the applicant will implement or provide: a career pathway training approach, adult basic skills activities, case management and career coaching services, and staff recruitment and retention efforts.
- Descriptions of provided support services to help participants complete their training, such as child care and transportation, and whether grantees will offer the option to use federal funds to provide participants with a stipend.
- Demonstration that the applicant has experience working with low-income populations or has a partner with such experience, a plan for post-employment services, and a plan for providing supportive services during the training program.
- Certification that the project development included consultation with the local workforce development board, consideration of apprenticeship models, consideration of existing career pathway programs, review of state workforce development plans.
- Local labor market information as evidence of health care workforce shortages or in-demand jobs, and the applicant must certify that they will directly provide, or contract for, the training services described in the application. Commitment to provide all data requested by HHS, hire a staff person to direct the project, and accept HHS technical assistance if awarded a grant.
- For the demonstration projects for training individuals with arrest or conviction records, complete applications must additionally include confirmation that the applicant will operate in a jurisdiction where local laws allow for health care credentials to be awarded in the health care professions for which the applicant will be training, description of understanding of local policies or appeals processes that offer opportunity to demonstrate rehabilitation to obtain health care credentials. The application must also include discussion of staff with experience working with people who have records, or working with employers with such experience, proof of concept, and a plan for participant recruitment and job placement.
- For the demonstration projects for training individuals seeking to enter the maternal mortality career pathway, complete applications must additionally include demonstration of partnerships and a program design that will support a career pathway and that the

demonstration be conducted in a jurisdiction where local laws permit doulas and midwives to practice in the State.

**Preferences in Considering Applications.** Gives priority for grants to:

- Prior HPOG Program grantees, applicants with cross-sector partnerships across social services and education and employers, applicants that provide coaching and mentoring, applicants that serve rural areas, and applicants that provide a cash stipend for living expenses or have a reserve fund to help participants with emergencies that might otherwise force them to drop out of training.

**Grants.** Provides the HHS Secretary with the authority to award HPOG Program funds.

- HPOG Program grant funds are to be awarded to eligible entities that have submitted qualified applications, and requires HHS to award at least 2 grants per state and the District of Columbia, at least 10 tribal grants, and at least 2 grants in the U.S. territories. The grant cycle period shall be not less than 5 years, which may include a planning period of no more than the first 12 months of the grant cycle.
- Establishes new demonstration grants using the HPOG model to train in the following types of projects: (I) Individuals with Arrest or Conviction Records, and (II) Maternal Mortality Career Pathway. Each demonstration project shall be conducted for not less than 5 years, and of the 6% funding set aside for the demonstrations, each demonstration project is required to receive not less than 25% of the total set-aside.

**Use of Grant.** Requires grantees to:

- Assess basic skills and provide basic skills education, if necessary; guarantee access to child care; provide case management plans that include career coaching; and ensure access to transportation to and from the training site.
- For the demonstration project for individuals with records, grantees must provide access to legal assistance to address arrest or conviction records and workforce barriers.
- Other allowable but not required uses of grant funding include: a stipend for living expenses, a reserve fund to provide financial assistance to participants in emergency situations, training materials such as uniforms and personal protective equipment, in-kind resource donations such as interview clothing and conference attendance fees, costs related to basic education or a high school equivalency certification, legal assistance or other support necessary to address arrest or conviction record workforce barriers.
- Grantees are required to provide sufficient training required for enrolled participants to qualify for certification of a postsecondary or industry-recognized credential in the state in which the project is conducted.
- At least 10% of enrolled participants must be income-eligible for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program.
- Grantees may not use funds for entertainment purposes, except for career-based milestones such as hosting a graduation.

**Income Disregard.** Specifies that any cash stipends or emergency assistance that grantees may provide directly to enrolled participants are not considered income.

**Technical Assistance.** Requires HHS to provide tailored technical assistance.

- HHS must provide technical assistance to prospective applicants and grantees to assist with all stages of project administration, including the specific needs of demonstration projects, and of tribal and territory applicants and grantees.
- HHS must also provide technical assistance to facilitate information exchange among eligible entities regarding best practices, including peer technical assistance conferences.

**Evaluation of Demonstration Projects.** Requires HHS to conduct rigorous and well-designed evaluations of demonstration projects.

- For the demonstration project for individuals with records, the evaluation must include identification of successful activities for developing and sustaining job training programs for people with records who seek a career in the health care industry.
- For the maternal mortality career pathway demonstration project, the evaluation must include identification of successful activities for developing and sustaining a career pathway for people seeking a career in pregnancy, childbirth, and post-partum fields.
- The evaluations may include a randomized control trial, but are not required to use that methodology.

**Reports to the Secretary.** Requires HPOG grantees to report certain data to HHS, including:

- participant graduation rate, graduation timeliness, credential attainment, employment in health professions, earnings, participant demographics, and other data specified by HHS.

**Funding.**

- Directly appropriates \$435 million for each of FY2026 through FY2030, of which \$10 million is reserved to supplement the cost of employing or retaining at least 25 career civil servants at the HHS Administration for Children & Families for the purpose of administering and evaluating the HPOG program, and with priority given to employing and retaining people with prior work experience at HHS.
- Of the remaining \$425 million, 75% is for general competitive grants, 4% is reserved for tribal grants, 5% is reserved for territory grants, 6% is reserved for the demonstration projects, 6% is reserved for technical assistance and sufficient staffing to ensure technical assistance support is locally-informed and provided in a timely manner, and 4% is reserved for rigorously studying the effects of all HPOG grants including the short-term and long-term effects of previously authorized demonstration grants, including completing remaining evaluations of prior grant cycles.

**Reports to Congress.** The HHS Secretary shall submit the following reports to the House Committee on Ways & Means and to the Senate Finance Committee:

- **HPOG Participant and Outcome Analysis**, to be submitted once per Congress. This report must include participant demographics, graduation rates, employment credential acquisition and earned wages, best and promising practices, technical assistance provided, information on the number of rural applicants and awards, length of time to award grant funds, any additional staffing or expertise needed to administer and evaluate the grants, assessments of grantee effectiveness, and, if HHS was unable to award the minimum required number of grants to states, territories, and tribal communities, the explanations for such.

- **Federal Workforce Analysis**, to be submitted within 6 months after enactment. A discussion of: historical or projected timeline of hiring and retaining personnel, hiring and retention data for federal personnel administering the grants, attestation that personnel receive benefits and civil service protections and adequate training as needed.
- **Federal Personnel Actions**, to be submitted annually. A report describing any personnel action taken related to HPOG Program staffing.
- **Annual Summary of National Evaluations of Prior Grants**, to be submitted annually. A summary of long term and longer-term effects of HPOG grants previously authorized.

**Definitions.** Provides definitions for terms used in the legislation.

**Non-applicability of Preceding Section of this Subtitle.** Exempts HPOG grants certain limitations on uses of *Social Security Act* Title XX funds that conflict with the evidence-based HPOG job training model.