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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. _____

To establish a program to fill critical rural workforce shortages through an education assistance and loan repayment in exchange for service in designated rural areas, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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

A BILL

To establish a program to fill critical rural workforce shortages through an education assistance and loan repayment in exchange for service in designated rural areas, 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. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Rural Service and
5 Workforce Corps Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. RURAL SERVICE AND WORKFORCE CORPS PRO-**
2 **GRAM.**

3 (a) DESIGN.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Agriculture
5 shall design a program to be known as the “Rural
6 Service and Workforce Corps Program”, modeled
7 after the service-for-benefits framework of the Na-
8 tional Health Service Corps, to fill critical workforce
9 shortages in targeted rural areas, through the provi-
10 sion of scholarships, tuition assistance, student loan
11 repayment, stipends or wage support during service,
12 and relocation and retention incentives in exchange
13 for 3 years of service in a rural area designated by
14 the Secretary.

15 (2) PRIORITY EMPLOYMENT SECTORS.—

16 (A) IN GENERAL.—The program shall be
17 designed to prioritize filling workforce shortages
18 in the following employment sectors, subject to
19 subparagraph (B):

20 (i) Health care, including primary
21 care, behavioral health, dental, and emer-
22 gency services.

23 (ii) Skilled trades, such as elec-
24 tricians, plumbers, heating, ventilation,
25 and air conditioning, welding, and con-
26 struction.

1 (iii) Energy infrastructure, such as
2 lineworkers, renewable energy technicians,
3 grid operators.

4 (iv) Utilities and public works, such
5 as water and wastewater operators and
6 broadband technicians.

7 (v) Other sectors with aging
8 workforces, as determined by the Secretary
9 of Labor.

10 (B) UPDATING.—The Secretary of Agri-
11 culture, in consultation with the Secretary of
12 Labor, shall, from time to time, update the em-
13 ployment sectors to be prioritized under sub-
14 paragraph (A), as necessary to ensure that the
15 program prioritizes any sector facing an aging
16 workforce and a limited recruitment pipeline.

17 (3) TARGETED RURAL AREAS.—The program
18 shall be designed to target any rural area—

19 (A) categorized by the Economic Research
20 Service of the Department of Agriculture as a
21 persistent poverty county;

22 (B) designated by the Health Resources
23 and Services Administration of the Department
24 of Health and Human Services as a health pro-
25 fessional shortage area; or

1 (C) in which an Indian tribal, an Alaska
2 Native, or a Native Hawaiian community re-
3 sides.

4 (4) EMPLOYER PARTICIPATION.—The program
5 shall be designed to allow public, nonprofit, coopera-
6 tive, tribal, and private employers that meet such
7 wage and training standards as the Secretary of Ag-
8 riculture shall establish, in consultation with the
9 Secretary of Labor, to participate in the program.

10 (b) ADMINISTRATION.—The Secretary of Agriculture
11 shall carry out the program in consultation with—

12 (1) the Secretary of Education, with respect to
13 the provision of scholarships, tuition assistance, and
14 student loan repayment;

15 (2) the Secretary of Labor, with respect to the
16 provision of stipends or wage support during service,
17 and relocation and retention incentives;

18 (3) the Secretary of Health and Human Serv-
19 ices, with respect to the health care employment sec-
20 tor;

21 (4) the Secretary of Energy, with respect to the
22 energy infrastructure and utilities employment sec-
23 tors; and

1 (5) the heads of other Federal departments and
2 agencies, with respect to any matter calling for the
3 expertise of the relevant department or agency.

4 (c) REPORTS.—Within 4 years after the date of the
5 enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall
6 prepare and submit to the Congress a written report on
7 the implementation and effectiveness of the program pro-
8 vided for in this Act, which shall—

9 (1) include information, with respect to the 1st
10 cohort subject to the 3-year service requirement
11 under the program, on—

12 (A) the number of persons in the cohort;

13 (B) the employment sectors in which a
14 member of the cohort has been placed;

15 (C) the geographical spread of the place-
16 ments;

17 (D) the types of employers referred to in
18 subsection (a)(4) with whom a member of the
19 cohort has been placed;

20 (E) the number of the placements; and

21 (F) the percentage of the cohort who re-
22 main in the geographic area in which placed;

23 (2) address any challenges arising from inter-
24 agency coordination; and

1 (3) include recommendations for improvements
2 in the program.

3 (d) DEFINITION OF RURAL AREA.—In this section,
4 the term “rural area” has the meaning given the term in
5 subparagraph (A) of section 343(a)(13) of the Consoli-
6 dated Farm and Rural Development Act, subject to sub-
7 paragraphs (D) and (F) of such section.

8 **SEC. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

9 This Act shall take effect on the date that is 1 year
10 after the date of the enactment of this Act.