

Union Calendar No. 530

115TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 4635

[Report No. 115–687]

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.

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 18, 2018

Additional sponsors: Mr. COLE, Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania, Mr. HIMES, Ms. LOFGREN, Mr. BISHOP of Michigan, Mr. POLIQUIN, Mrs. DINGELL, Ms. MOORE, Mr. O'ROURKE, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. RUTHERFORD, Mr. KIND, Mrs. RADEWAGEN, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN of Puerto Rico, Mr. KILMER, Mr. COURTNEY, Ms. KUSTER of New Hampshire, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. PETERS, Miss RICE of New York, Mr. DEUTCH, Mr. BOST, Ms. SHEAPORTER, and Mr. SOTO

MAY 18, 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 italic]

[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.*

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