

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1490

To establish a grant program to assist in the provision of safety measures to protect social workers and other professionals who work with at-risk populations.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 12, 2009

Mr. MOORE of Kansas (for himself, Ms. DELAURO, Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, Mr. HOLT, Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Mr. CHANDLER, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. OLVER, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. HINCHEY, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Ms. SCHWARTZ, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Mr. KENNEDY, Ms. KILPATRICK of Michigan, Mr. MEEKS of New York, Mr. KUCINICH, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. SABLAN, Mr. PAYNE, and Mr. CARNAHAN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

A BILL

To establish a grant program to assist in the provision of safety measures to protect social workers and other professionals who work with at-risk populations.

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 “Teri Zenner Social
5 Worker Safety Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) According to the Occupational Safety and
2 Health Administration, some 2 million American
3 workers are victims of job-related violence each year.

4 (2) On August 17, 2004, Teri Zenner, a social
5 worker and case manager with Johnson County
6 Mental Health Center, was stabbed and killed dur-
7 ing a routine, in-home visit with a client.

8 (3) Based on OSHA's most recently published
9 "Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence for
10 Health Care & Social Service Workers", 48 percent
11 of all non-fatal injuries from occupational assaults
12 and violent acts occurred in the fields of health care
13 and social services.

14 (4) A major study by the American Federation
15 of State, County, and Municipal Employees, found
16 that 70 percent of front-line child welfare workers
17 had been victims of violence or threats in the line of
18 duty. A review of the 585 exit interviews found that
19 90 percent of former child welfare workers experi-
20 enced verbal threats, 30 percent experienced physical
21 attacks, and 13 percent had been threatened with
22 weapons.

23 (5) Based on 2000 Bureau of Labor Statistics
24 findings, social service workers in the public sector,
25 including social workers and case workers, are ap-

1 proximately 7 times more likely to be the victims of
2 violent assaults while at work than are workers in
3 the private sector.

4 (6) States such as California, New Jersey, and
5 Washington, and the National Association of Social
6 Workers, have all developed various safety programs
7 with safety guidelines for social workers and case
8 workers to follow while in the course of their employ-
9 ment.

10 (7) Social workers and case workers elevate
11 service to others above self-interest, and draw on
12 their knowledge, values and skills to help people in
13 need and to address social problems. Job-related vio-
14 lence against social workers and case workers affects
15 these hard-working and dedicated individuals, their
16 families, their clients, and their communities
17 throughout the United States.

18 (8) There is a need to increase public awareness
19 and understanding of job-related violence in the field
20 of social services and to meet the needs of social
21 workers and case workers in preventing such vio-
22 lence. Although not every incident of job-related vio-
23 lence can be prevented, many can, and the severity
24 of injuries sustained by social workers and case
25 workers can be reduced.

1 **SEC. 3. SOCIAL WORKER SAFETY GRANT PROGRAM.**

2 (a) GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary of Health
3 and Human Services (the “Secretary”), through the Sub-
4 stance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration,
5 is authorized to award grants to States to provide safety
6 measures to social workers and other professionals work-
7 ing with violent, drug-using, or other at-risk populations.

8 (b) USE OF FUNDS.—Grants awarded pursuant to
9 subsection (a) may be used to provide or support the fol-
10 lowing safety measures:

11 (1) The procurement and installation of safety
12 equipment, including communications systems, such
13 as GPS tracking devices and GPS cell telephones to
14 assist agencies in locating staff, and any technical
15 assistance and training for safety communications.

16 (2) Training exercises for self-defense and crisis
17 management.

18 (3) Facility safety improvements.

19 (4) The provision of pepper spray for self-de-
20 fense.

21 (5) Training in cultural competency, including
22 linguistic training, and training on strategies for de-
23 escalating a situation that could turn volatile.

24 (6) Training to help workers who work with
25 mentally ill community or that have behavioral prob-
26 lems and need help coping.

1 (7) Educational resources and materials to
2 train staff on safety and awareness measures.

3 (8) Other activities determined by the Secretary
4 to be safety training.

5 (c) APPLICATION.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—A State seeking a grant
7 under subsection (a) shall submit an application to
8 the Secretary, at such time, in such manner, and ac-
9 companied by such additional information as the
10 Secretary may require.

11 (2) CONTENTS.—Each application submitted
12 pursuant to paragraph (1) shall—

13 (A) describe the type of agencies that will
14 be receiving funding from the grant and type of
15 work done by such agencies;

16 (B) describe the specific activities for
17 which assistance under this section is sought
18 and include a program budget; and

19 (C) contain an assurance that the appli-
20 cant will evaluate the effectiveness of the safety
21 measure provided with funds received under the
22 grant.

23 (d) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under subsection
24 (a), the Secretary shall give priority to those applicants
25 that—

1 (1) demonstrate the greatest need based on
2 documented incidents; and

3 (2) seek to provide assistance to multiple agen-
4 cies.

5 (e) **QUALITY ASSURANCE AND COST-EFFECTIVE-**
6 **NESS.**—The Secretary shall establish guidelines for assur-
7 ing the cost-effectiveness and quality of the safety meas-
8 ures funded under this section.

9 (f) **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.**—The Secretary may
10 provide technical assistance to grant recipients with re-
11 spect to planning, developing, and implementing safety
12 measures under the grant.

13 (g) **REPORT REQUIREMENT.**—States receiving grants
14 shall file with the Secretary, not later than 2 years after
15 the receipt of the grant, information that includes—

16 (1) an assessment of the activities funded in
17 whole or in part with such grant;

18 (2) the range and scope of training opportuni-
19 ties, including numbers and percentage of social
20 workers engaged in the training programs funded in
21 whole or in part by such grant; and

22 (3) the incidence of threats to social workers, if
23 any, and the strategies used to address their safety.

1 (h) NON-FEDERAL SHARE.—For any State receiving
2 a grant under this section, the non-Federal share of any
3 program to provide safety measures shall be 50 percent.

4 (i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
5 authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Health
6 and Human Services \$5,000,000 for each of fiscal years
7 2010 through 2014 to carry out this Act.

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