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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. _____

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a program under which the Secretary shall award grants to certain State entities to expand access to structured outdoor recreation programs for veterans that enhance veteran wellness, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. HURD of Colorado introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a program under which the Secretary shall award grants to certain State entities to expand access to structured outdoor recreation programs for veterans that enhance veteran wellness, 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 “Veterans Outdoor Re-
5 habilitation Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. GRANT PROGRAM TO SUPPORT OUTDOOR RECRE-**
2 **ATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR VETERANS.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
4 shall establish a program under which the Secretary shall
5 award grants to covered State entities to expand access
6 to structured outdoor recreation programs for veterans
7 that enhance veteran wellness.

8 (b) USE OF AMOUNTS.—A covered State entity
9 awarded a grant under this section may use amounts
10 under such grant as follows:

11 (1) To directly develop and administer an out-
12 door recreation program for veterans.

13 (2) To contract with local outfitters, guides,
14 nonprofit organizations, or community-based outdoor
15 recreation providers to conduct such program.

16 (3) To develop partnerships to deliver struc-
17 tured outdoor programming for veterans.

18 (4) To reduce financial barriers to participation
19 in such program, including equipment, program fees,
20 and reasonable transportation costs.

21 (5) To conduct outreach to veteran populations
22 to raise awareness about such program.

23 (6) To expand an existing outdoor recreation
24 program for veterans operated in the State.

1 (7) To coordinate with Federal agencies in-
2 volved in land management with respect to such pro-
3 gram, including the following:

4 (A) The National Park Service.

5 (B) The Bureau of Land Management.

6 (C) The Forest Service.

7 (D) The United States Fish and Wildlife
8 Service.

9 (E) The Army Corps of Engineers.

10 (c) COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION.—

11 (1) COLLABORATION.—The Secretary shall en-
12 courage collaboration between covered State entities
13 participating in the grant program under this sec-
14 tion and the Federal agencies described in sub-
15 section (b)(7) to—

16 (A) expand access by veterans to outdoor
17 spaces;

18 (B) to reduce administrative barriers; and

19 (C) to identify appropriate locations for or-
20 ganized activities.

21 (2) COORDINATION.—The Secretary shall en-
22 courage covered State entities participating in the
23 grant program under this section to coordinate with
24 other covered State entities to maximize access by
25 veterans to outdoor recreation opportunities.

1 (d) APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS.—To receive a
2 grant under this section, a covered State entity shall sub-
3 mit to the Secretary an application therefor that includes
4 the following:

5 (1) A plan for administering funds awarded
6 under such grant.

7 (2) Criteria for selecting partners for the out-
8 door recreation program or programs carried out by
9 such entity.

10 (3) A certification that the outdoor recreation
11 program or programs carried out by such entity
12 meet qualification standards determined by the
13 State.

14 (4) Methods for collecting data for participation
15 in the outdoor recreation program or programs car-
16 ried out by such entity.

17 (e) APPROVAL OF APPLICATION AND FUNDING
18 AMOUNTS.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to the availability of
20 appropriations, each covered State entity that sub-
21 mits an application meeting the requirements under
22 subsection (d) for a grant under this section shall be
23 approved to receive such grant in an amount of not
24 less than \$200,000 for the applicable fiscal year.

1 (2) ADDITIONAL AMOUNTS.—If additional
2 amounts are available for a fiscal year to carry out
3 this section, those additional amounts shall be dis-
4 tributed among the covered State entities for which
5 an application under subsection (d) was approved
6 under paragraph (1).

7 (f) REPORTS.—Not less frequently than annually,
8 each covered State entity in receipt of a grant under this
9 section shall submit to the Secretary a report that includes
10 the following:

11 (1) Participation metrics regarding any outdoor
12 recreation program carried out by such entity with
13 amounts provided under such grant, including—

14 (A) the types of activities funded and part-
15 nerships established under such program;

16 (B) the number of veterans served under
17 such program;

18 (C) frequency of participation by veterans
19 under such program; and

20 (D) demographic distribution of veterans
21 participating in such program.

22 (2) Observations with respect to any outdoor
23 recreation program carried out by such entity, in-
24 cluding—

1 (A) self-reported changes in well-being of
2 veterans;

3 (B) social connectedness indicators; and

4 (C) physical activity engagement.

5 (g) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

6 (1) The term “outdoor recreation program”
7 means a nature-based activity designed to improve
8 the mental and physical well-being of veterans, in-
9 cluding activities that promote physical engagement,
10 peer connection, skill-building, or therapeutic ben-
11 efit, and may include adaptive or accessible activities
12 designed to accommodate veterans with disabilities.

13 (2) The term “covered State entity” means the
14 primary agency of a State that is responsible for
15 programs and services for veterans.

16 (h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
17 authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Veterans
18 Affairs \$10,000,000 for each fiscal year to carry out this
19 section.