

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. _____

To amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize a scholarship and loan repayment program to incentivize physicians to enter into the field of sickle cell disease research, treatment, and patient care, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. VAN HOLLEN (for himself and Mr. BOOKER) introduced the following bill;
which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

A BILL

To amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize a scholarship and loan repayment program to incentivize physicians to enter into the field of sickle cell disease research, treatment, and patient care, 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 “Sickle Cell Care Ex-
5 pansion Act of 2026”.

1 **SEC. 2. ADVANCING TREATMENT AND RESEARCH PER-**
2 **TAINING TO SICKLE CELL DISEASE.**

3 Part D of title III of the Public Health Service Act
4 (42 U.S.C. 254b et seq.) is amended by adding at the end
5 the following:

6 **“Subpart XIII—Advancing Treatment and Research**
7 **Pertaining to Sickle Cell Disease**
8 **“SEC. 340J. SCHOLARSHIP AND LOAN REPAYMENT PRO-**
9 **GRAM.**

10 “(a) IN GENERAL.—To advance learning regarding
11 sickle cell disease and to enhance the supply of physicians
12 to treat such disease, especially with respect to adult popu-
13 lations, the Secretary, acting through the Administrator
14 of the Health Resources and Services Administration,
15 shall carry out a program consisting of entering into con-
16 tracts with individuals under which—

17 “(1) the Secretary awards a scholarship under
18 subsection (b) or agrees to make loan repayments
19 under subsection (c) with respect to each individual;
20 and

21 “(2) the individual agrees to serve for a period
22 (in this section referred to as the ‘period of obligated
23 service’) as a physician engaged in—

24 “(A) sickle cell disease research; or

25 “(B) service in a public or private setting
26 that is primarily focused on treatment and edu-

1 cation related to sickle cell disease in a health
2 care facility, clinic, rural health clinic, mobile
3 medical asset, or other facility as determined by
4 the Secretary.

5 “(b) SCHOLARSHIPS.—

6 “(1) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible to participate
7 in the scholarship program under this section, an in-
8 dividual shall—

9 “(A) be accepted for enrollment, or be en-
10 rolled, as a full-time student in an accredited
11 (as determined by the Secretary) educational
12 institution in a State and in a course of study
13 or program offered by such institution and ap-
14 proved by the Secretary, leading to a degree in
15 medicine or osteopathic medicine;

16 “(B) submit an application to participate
17 in the scholarship program; and

18 “(C) sign and submit to the Secretary, at
19 the time of submission of such application, a
20 written contract (described in paragraph (2)) to
21 accept payment of a scholarship and to serve
22 (in accordance with this section) for the appli-
23 cable period of obligated service.

1 “(2) WRITTEN CONTRACT.—The written con-
2 tract under this subsection between the Secretary
3 and an individual shall contain—

4 “(A) an agreement that—

5 “(i) subject to paragraph (1), the Sec-
6 retary agrees to provide the individual with
7 a scholarship in each such school year or
8 years for a period of years (not to exceed
9 4 school years) determined by the indi-
10 vidual, during which period the individual
11 is pursuing a course of study described in
12 paragraph (1)(A); and

13 “(ii) subject to paragraph (1), the in-
14 dividual agrees to—

15 “(I) accept provision of such a
16 scholarship to the individual;

17 “(II) maintain enrollment in a
18 course of study described in para-
19 graph (1)(A) until the individual com-
20 pletes the course of study;

21 “(III) maintain an acceptable
22 level of academic standing;

23 “(IV) complete a residency in a
24 specialty that the Secretary deter-

1 mines is consistent with pursuit of a
2 fellowship in hematology;

3 “(V) complete a fellowship in the
4 specialty of hematology; and

5 “(VI) serve for a time period
6 equal to one year for each school year
7 for which the individual was provided
8 a scholarship under this section;

9 “(B) a provision that any financial obliga-
10 tion of the United States arising out of the con-
11 tract and any obligation of the individual which
12 is conditioned thereon, is contingent upon funds
13 being appropriated for scholarships under this
14 section;

15 “(C) a statement of the damages to which
16 the United States is entitled if the individual
17 should breach the contract; and

18 “(D) such other statements of the rights
19 and liabilities of the Secretary and of the indi-
20 vidual as the Secretary determines appropriate,
21 not inconsistent with the provisions of this sec-
22 tion.

23 “(c) LOAN REPAYMENTS.—

1 “(1) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible to participate
2 in the loan repayment program under this section,
3 an individual shall—

4 “(A) have a degree in medicine or osteo-
5 pathic medicine; be enrolled in an approved
6 graduate training program in medicine or osteo-
7 pathic medicine; or be enrolled as a full-time
8 student in an accredited (as determined by the
9 Secretary) educational institution in a State,
10 and in the final year of a course of study of-
11 fered by such institution and approved by the
12 Secretary, leading to a degree in medicine or
13 osteopathic medicine;

14 “(B) submit an application to participate
15 in the loan repayment program; and

16 “(C) sign and submit to the Secretary, at
17 the time of submission of such application, a
18 written contract (described in paragraph (2)) to
19 accept payment by the Secretary of the edu-
20 cational loans of the individual in consideration
21 of the individual serving for a period of obli-
22 gated service.

23 “(2) WRITTEN CONTRACT.—The written con-
24 tract under this subsection between the Secretary
25 and an individual shall contain—

1 “(A) an agreement that—

2 “(i) subject to paragraph (1), the Sec-
3 retary agrees to pay on behalf of the indi-
4 vidual the principal, interest, and related
5 expenses on government and commercial
6 loans received by the individual regarding
7 the undergraduate or graduate education
8 of the individual (or both), which loans
9 were made for—

10 “(I) tuition expenses;

11 “(II) all other reasonable edu-
12 cational expenses, including fees,
13 books, and laboratory expenses, in-
14 curred by the individual; or

15 “(III) reasonable living expenses
16 as determined by the Secretary; and

17 “(ii) subject to paragraph (1), the in-
18 dividual agrees to—

19 “(I) accept loan payments on be-
20 half of the individual;

21 “(II) maintain enrollment in a
22 course of study described in para-
23 graph (1)(A) (if applicable) until the
24 individual completes the course of
25 study;

1 “(III) maintain an acceptable
2 level of academic standing;

3 “(IV) complete a residency in a
4 specialty that the Secretary deter-
5 mines is consistent with pursuit of a
6 fellowship in hematology; and

7 “(V) complete a fellowship in he-
8 matology;

9 “(B) a provision that any financial obliga-
10 tion of the United States arising out of the con-
11 tract and any obligation of the individual which
12 is conditioned thereon, is contingent upon funds
13 being appropriated for loan repayments under
14 this section;

15 “(C) a statement of the damages to which
16 the United States is entitled if the individual
17 should breach the contract; and

18 “(D) such other statements of the rights
19 and liabilities of the Secretary and of the indi-
20 vidual as the Secretary determines appropriate,
21 not inconsistent with the provisions of this sec-
22 tion.

23 “(d) PRIORITY.—In awarding contracts under this
24 section for scholarships and loan repayments, the Sec-

1 retary may prioritize making awards to individuals from
2 disadvantaged backgrounds.

3 “(e) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term ‘sickle
4 cell disease research’ means research into the detection,
5 diagnosis, treatment, or control of sickle cell disease.

6 “(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—To
7 carry out this section, there is authorized to be appro-
8 priated \$150,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2027
9 through 2032.

10 **“SEC. 340J-1. COMMUNITY-BASED GRANTS TO ENGAGE THE**
11 **SICKLE CELL DISEASE POPULATION BY DE-**
12 **SIGNING EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY PRO-**
13 **GRAMS AND POLICIES FOR HEALTH AND**
14 **COMMUNITY SERVICES.**

15 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry out a
16 program consisting of awarding grants to eligible entities
17 for the establishment and support of education and advo-
18 cacy programs that engage the sickle cell disease popu-
19 lation, their families, or State and local governments in
20 order to—

21 “(1) improve sickle cell disease health literacy,
22 including mental health awareness and educational
23 attainment;

24 “(2) disseminate information on health and
25 community services related to sickle cell disease; or

1 “(3) improve access to care and treatment deci-
2 sion-making processes related to sickle cell disease.

3 “(b) APPLICATIONS.—To seek a grant under sub-
4 section (a), an eligible entity shall submit an application
5 to the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and con-
6 taining such information and assurances as the Secretary
7 may require.

8 “(c) CONSIDERATION.—In determining whether to
9 award a grant under this section to an applicant, and the
10 amount of a grant under this section, the Secretary shall
11 consider the need for sickle cell education or services in
12 the area to be served using the grant.

13 “(d) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term ‘eligible
14 entity’ means—

15 “(1) a community-based organization or faith-
16 based organization or clinic that provides services to,
17 or engages in, advocacy for individuals with sickle
18 cell disease;

19 “(2) a nonprofit organization providing com-
20 prehensive care to populations with sickle cell dis-
21 ease, including any such nonprofit organization that
22 is a faith-based organization or community-based or-
23 ganization; or

24 “(3) a Federally qualified health center (as de-
25 fined in section 1861(aa) of the Social Security Act)

1 or nonprofit organization engaged in providing sickle
2 cell disease education, information, or treatment
3 services.

4 “(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—To
5 carry out this section, there is authorized to be appro-
6 priated \$50,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2027 through
7 2032.

8 **“SEC. 340J-2. GRANTS FOR SICKLE CELL DISEASE PEDI-**
9 **ATRIC TO ADULT TRANSITIONS OF CARE.**

10 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry out a
11 program of awarding grants to eligible entities for the es-
12 tablishment and support of programs—

13 “(1) that—

14 “(A) provide transition support through a
15 dedicated transition coordinator and manage-
16 ment of care for sickle cell disease patients be-
17 tween the ages of 18 and 29 who are aging out
18 of pediatric care and receiving adult care for
19 sickle cell disease;

20 “(B) assist sickle cell patients in identi-
21 fying and maintaining adult primary care pro-
22 viders and adult specialists for sickle cell dis-
23 ease compatible with the patient’s health insur-
24 ance; and

1 “(C) provide support services, including
2 mental health services, for the management of
3 the patient’s treatments and medical appoint-
4 ments throughout the transition to adult care;
5 and

6 “(2) which, in the case of an eligible entity that
7 is a hospital or an institute of higher education, may
8 include providing training to adult sickle cell disease
9 care specialists on the medical needs of young sickle
10 cell disease patients, through—

11 “(A) 1- to 2-year long fellowships for any
12 individual that has completed a residency in
13 medicine, combined internal medicine and pedi-
14 atrics, or family medicine; or

15 “(B) short-term programs and workshops.

16 “(b) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—To be eligible to receive
17 a grant under this section, an entity shall—

18 “(1) be a nonprofit organization providing com-
19 prehensive care to populations with sickle cell dis-
20 ease, including a hospital or an institute of higher
21 education, and including any such nonprofit organi-
22 zation that is a faith-based organization or commu-
23 nity-based organization; and

24 “(2) submit an application to the Secretary at
25 such time, in such manner, and containing such in-

1 formation and assurances as the Secretary may re-
2 quire.

3 “(c) CONSIDERATION.—In determining whether to
4 award a grant under this section to an eligible entity, and
5 the amount of a grant under this section, the Secretary
6 shall consider the size of the population the eligible entity
7 intends to serve.

8 “(d) REPORTS.—

9 “(1) REPORTING BY ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—Eli-
10 gible entities receiving a grant under this section
11 shall submit, during the grant period, an annual re-
12 port to the Secretary. Each such report shall—

13 “(A) use an established and recognized
14 registry on measuring quality metrics specified
15 by the Secretary; and

16 “(B) include—

17 “(i) a description of the activities car-
18 ried out using the grant funds;

19 “(ii) a summary of the health out-
20 comes for sickle cell patients benefitting
21 from the transition coordination and man-
22 agement program supported by the grant;
23 and

24 “(iii) the number of specialists trained
25 and fellowships funded under the grant, as

1 described in subsection (a)(2), as applica-
2 ble.

3 “(2) REPORTING BY THE SECRETARY.—Not
4 later than 2 years after the date of enactment of the
5 Sickle Cell Care Expansion Act of 2026, and annu-
6 ally thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the
7 Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pen-
8 sions of the Senate and the Committee on Energy
9 and Commerce of the House of Representatives a re-
10 port on activities carried out by eligible entities
11 under this section, based on the reports submitted to
12 the Secretary under paragraph (1).

13 “(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—To
14 carry out this section, there is authorized to be appro-
15 priated \$70,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2027 through
16 2032.”.