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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To support the establishment or expansion and operation of programs using a network of public and private community entities to provide mentoring for children and youth with experience in foster care.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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

A BILL

To support the establishment or expansion and operation of programs using a network of public and private community entities to provide mentoring for children and youth with experience in foster care.

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 “Foster Youth Men-
5 toring Act of 2025”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

1 (1) Positive relationships are important for chil-
2 dren and youth. An estimated 20 percent of youth
3 do not have caring adults in their lives, representing
4 8,500,000 youth. Children who have a positive car-
5 ing relationship with an adult can also benefit from
6 additional positive relationships.

7 (2) Research shows that mentors make a dif-
8 ference in young people's lives. At-risk youth who
9 have mentors are 55 percent more likely to enroll in
10 college. Students who meet regularly with their men-
11 tors are 52 percent less likely than their peers to
12 skip a day of school. Youth who have mentors are
13 also 75 percent more likely to hold a leadership posi-
14 tion in a club or sports team.

15 (3) Young people that have mentors have im-
16 proved relationships with adults, fewer disciplinary
17 referrals, and more confidence in achieving their
18 goals.

19 (4) In 2021, 391,311 youth were in foster care.
20 Of those youth, 86,793 were between the ages of 11
21 and 15, and 55,396 were between the ages of 16 and
22 20.

23 (5) Mentoring programs that serve foster youth
24 are unique and require additional considerations, in-
25 cluding specialized training and support necessary to

1 provide for consistent, long-term relationships for
2 children in foster care.

3 (6) Mentoring programs can be used as an ef-
4 fective strategy to support positive outcomes for fos-
5 ter youth, such as improved mental health, reduc-
6 tions in substance misuse, and increased life satis-
7 faction. Additionally, mentoring relationships are as-
8 sociated with supporting fewer placement changes
9 for youth and improved use of transition services
10 when exiting foster care.

11 (7) Mentoring programs targeting youth experi-
12 encing multiple risk factors, community-based pro-
13 grams, and programs lasting 1 year or more are
14 more effective in supporting youth in foster care.

15 (8) Mentored youth showed lower rates of in-
16 volvement in the juvenile justice system and lower
17 rates of involvement in the legal system as adults.

18 (9) Increasing evidence is showing that peer
19 mentoring and support can be very effective in en-
20 gaging young people. Alumni of and youth in foster
21 care have noted the importance of the support and
22 service delivery by individuals with lived experience,
23 including peers.

1 **SEC. 3. PROGRAMS FOR MENTORING CHILDREN IN FOSTER**
2 **CARE.**

3 Subpart 2 of part B of title IV of the Social Security
4 Act (42 U.S.C. 629 et seq.) is amended by adding at the
5 end the following:

6 **“SEC. 439A. PROGRAMS FOR MENTORING CHILDREN IN**
7 **FOSTER CARE AND YOUTH WITH EXPERI-**
8 **ENCE IN FOSTER CARE.**

9 “(a) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this section to
10 authorize the Secretary to make grants to eligible appli-
11 cants to support the establishment or expansion and oper-
12 ation of programs using a network of public and private
13 community entities to provide mentoring for children in
14 foster care and children with experience in foster care.

15 “(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

16 “(1) CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.—The term
17 ‘children in foster care’ means children who have
18 been removed from the custody of their biological or
19 adoptive parents by a State or tribal child welfare
20 agency.

21 “(2) CHILDREN WITH EXPERIENCE IN FOSTER
22 CARE.—The term ‘children with experience in foster
23 care’ means children, youth, and adults who have
24 not attained 26 years of age and who, at any time,
25 were removed from the custody of their biological or

1 adoptive parents by a State or tribal child welfare
2 agency.

3 “(3) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligible en-
4 tity’ means—

5 “(A) a nonprofit organization;

6 “(B) a State child welfare agency;

7 “(C) a local educational agency;

8 “(D) an Indian tribe or a tribal organiza-
9 tion; or

10 “(E) a faith-based organization.

11 “(4) MENTORING.—The term ‘mentoring’
12 means a structured, managed program—

13 “(A) in which children and youth are ap-
14 propriately matched with screened and trained
15 adult or peer volunteers for consistent relation-
16 ships;

17 “(B) that can include direct one-on-one,
18 group, or peer mentoring services that focus on
19 1 or more of—

20 “(i) academic support;

21 “(ii) enrichment;

22 “(iii) educational success;

23 “(iv) minimizing risk behaviors; or

24 “(v) promoting social skills and
25 healthy relationships;

1 “(C) that involves meetings, events, and
2 activities on a regular basis designed to last at
3 least 1 year; and

4 “(D) that is intended to meet, in part, the
5 social and emotional development of the child or
6 youth, the need of the child or youth for in-
7 volvement with a caring and supportive adult,
8 and the need of the child or youth for positive
9 role models, connections, and normalcy.

10 “(c) GRANT PROGRAM.—

11 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry
12 out a program to award grants to eligible entities to
13 support the establishment or expansion and oper-
14 ation of programs using networks of public and pri-
15 vate community entities to provide mentoring for
16 children in foster care and children with experience
17 in foster care.

18 “(2) APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS.—To be eli-
19 gible for a grant under paragraph (1), an eligible en-
20 tity shall submit to the Secretary an application con-
21 taining the following:

22 “(A) PROGRAM DESIGN.—A description of
23 the proposed program to be carried out using
24 amounts provided under this grant, including—

1 “(i) targeted outcomes, mentee age
2 and eligibility, mentor type, setting, dura-
3 tion, and meeting frequency;

4 “(ii) the number of mentor-child
5 matches proposed to be established and
6 maintained annually under the program;

7 “(iii) the capacity and expertise of the
8 program to serve children and youth in a
9 way that is responsive to children and
10 youth of color, expectant and parenting
11 youth, indigenous youth, youth who are
12 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or
13 queer, and youth with disabilities;

14 “(iv) actions taken to ensure that the
15 design of the program reflects input from
16 young people, including children with expe-
17 rience in foster care; and

18 “(v) such other information as the
19 Secretary may require.

20 “(B) RECRUITMENT.—An assurance that
21 the program will engage in recruitment strate-
22 gies for mentors that—

23 “(i) realistically portray the benefits,
24 practices, supports, and challenges of par-
25 ticipating in the program; and

1 “(ii) seek to recruit mentors who re-
2 flect the race, ethnicity, and various identi-
3 ties of children in foster care and children
4 with experience in foster care.

5 “(C) TRAINING.—An assurance that all
6 mentors covered under the program will receive
7 intensive and ongoing training in the following
8 areas:

9 “(i) Child and adolescent develop-
10 ment, including the importance of bonding.

11 “(ii) Family dynamics, including the
12 effects of domestic violence and trauma.

13 “(iii) Understanding the education
14 rights of foster children and youth, includ-
15 ing those related to post-secondary edu-
16 cation.

17 “(iv) The challenges of and ap-
18 proaches to support the transition to adult-
19 hood.

20 “(v) Cultural competence practices
21 and relationship-building strategies.

22 “(vi) Positive youth development and
23 authentic engagement practices.

24 “(vii) Recognizing and reporting child
25 abuse and neglect.

1 “(viii) Confidentiality requirements
2 for working with children in foster care.

3 “(ix) Working in coordination with
4 the child welfare system.

5 “(x) Other matters related to working
6 with children in foster care and children
7 with experience in foster care.

8 “(D) SCREENING.—An assurance that all
9 mentors covered under the program are appro-
10 priately screened and have demonstrated a will-
11 ingness to comply with all aspects of the men-
12 toring program, including—

13 “(i) a written screening plan that in-
14 cludes all of the policies and procedures
15 used to screen and select mentors, includ-
16 ing eligibility requirements and preferences
17 for such applicants;

18 “(ii) a description of the methods to
19 be used to conduct criminal background
20 checks on all prospective mentors, and the
21 methods in place to exclude mentors with
22 convictions for crimes against children and
23 mentors with convictions occurring within
24 the past 10 years that are directly related
25 to child safety; and

1 “(iii) a description of the methods to
2 be used to ensure that the mentors are
3 willing and able to serve as a mentor on a
4 long-term, consistent basis as defined in
5 the application.

6 “(E) COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND EN-
7 GAGEMENT; COORDINATION WITH OTHER PRO-
8 GRAMS.—A demonstration that, in developing
9 and implementing the program, the eligible en-
10 tity will—

11 “(i) consult with and actively en-
12 gage—

13 “(I) children in foster care and
14 children with experience in foster
15 care;

16 “(II) public and private commu-
17 nity entities, including religious orga-
18 nizations and Indian tribal organiza-
19 tions and urban Indian organizations;
20 and

21 “(III) family members of children
22 and youth who may be potential cli-
23 ents of the program;

24 “(ii) coordinate the mentoring pro-
25 gram and the activities of the eligible enti-

1 ty with other Federal, State, and local pro-
2 grams serving children and youth; and

3 “(iii) consult and coordinate with ap-
4 propriate Federal, State, and local correc-
5 tions, workforce development, education,
6 and substance abuse and mental health
7 agencies.

8 “(F) EQUAL ACCESS FOR LOCAL SERVICE
9 PROVIDERS.—An assurance that public and pri-
10 vate entities and nonprofit community organiza-
11 tions, including religious organizations and In-
12 dian organizations, will be eligible to participate
13 on an equal basis.

14 “(G) RECORDS, REPORTS, AND AUDITS.—
15 An agreement that the eligible entity will main-
16 tain such records, make such reports, and co-
17 operate with such reviews or audits as the Sec-
18 retary may find necessary for purposes of over-
19 sight of project activities and expenditures.

20 “(H) EVALUATION.—An agreement that
21 the eligible entity will cooperate fully with the
22 ongoing and final evaluation of the program
23 under the plan by the Secretary, by means in-
24 cluding providing the Secretary access to the
25 program, the staff of the program, program-re-

1 lated records and documents, and each public
2 or private community entity receiving funding
3 under the plan.

4 “(3) CONSIDERATIONS IN AWARDING
5 GRANTS.—In awarding grants under this subsection,
6 the Secretary shall take into consideration—

7 “(A) how, and the degree to which, chil-
8 dren in foster care and children with experience
9 in foster care are consulted and engaged in the
10 development, design, and implementation of the
11 program;

12 “(B) the feasibility and strength of a plan
13 to recruit and support transition-aged foster
14 youth;

15 “(C) the overall qualifications and capacity
16 of the eligible entity and its partners to effec-
17 tively carry out a mentoring program under this
18 subsection;

19 “(D) the level and quality of training pro-
20 vided to mentors under the program;

21 “(E) evidence of coordination of the pro-
22 gram with the social services and education pro-
23 grams of the State or political subdivision;

24 “(F) the ability of the eligible entity to
25 provide supervision and support for mentors

1 under the program and the youth served by
2 such mentors;

3 “(G) the number of children and youth in
4 foster care served by the State or political sub-
5 division; and

6 “(H) any other factors that the Secretary
7 determines to be significant with respect to the
8 need for, or the potential success of, carrying
9 out a mentoring program under this section.

10 “(4) USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity that
11 receives a grant under this subsection may use such
12 funds to—

13 “(A) develop and carry out a training pro-
14 gram and ongoing support for mentors;

15 “(B) recruit mentors for children and
16 youth in foster care;

17 “(C) compensate mentors including peer
18 mentors;

19 “(D) pay for costs related to mentee par-
20 ticipation in the program; and

21 “(E) provide activities that will help the
22 development of a child in foster care who is
23 participating in the program.

24 “(5) GRANT AMOUNT.—In awarding grants
25 under this subsection, the Secretary shall scale

1 grants to account for the annual budget and capac-
2 ity of the eligible entity.

3 “(6) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than 1 year
4 after the date of enactment of this section, and an-
5 nually thereafter, the Secretary shall prepare and
6 submit to Congress a report that includes the fol-
7 lowing with respect to the year involved:

8 “(A) A description of the number of pro-
9 grams receiving grant awards under this sub-
10 section.

11 “(B) A description of mentors who partici-
12 pate in programs described in subparagraph
13 (A), including the overall number, average
14 length of participation, and demographics.

15 “(C) A description of—

16 “(i) the number of children in foster
17 care who participated in mentoring pro-
18 grams funded by the grant funds under
19 this subsection;

20 “(ii) data on the academic achieve-
21 ment of the children in mentoring pro-
22 grams funded by the grant funds under
23 this subsection; and

24 “(iii) the number of children in foster
25 care on waiting lists for such mentoring

1 programs, including successful transition
2 into post-secondary education where appli-
3 cable.

4 “(D) Any other information that the Sec-
5 retary determines to be relevant to the evalua-
6 tion of the program under this section.

7 “(7) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—
8 There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
9 this section—

10 “(A) \$50,000,000 for each of fiscal years
11 2026 and 2027; and

12 “(B) such sums as may be necessary for
13 each succeeding fiscal year.”.