

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 10374

To require the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy to develop a consistent set of policy guidelines for Federal research agencies to address mental health and mentoring of graduate researchers and postdoctoral researchers, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 11, 2024

Mr. TONKO (for himself and Ms. McCLELLAN) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

A BILL

To require the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy to develop a consistent set of policy guidelines for Federal research agencies to address mental health and mentoring of graduate researchers and postdoctoral researchers, 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 “Mental health En-
5 hancement, Navigation, and Treatment for Our Research-
6 ers Act of 2024” or the “MENTOR Act of 2024”.

1 **SEC. 2. POLICY GUIDELINES FOR FEDERAL RESEARCH**
2 **AGENCIES TO ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH**
3 **CRISIS AMONG GRADUATE RESEARCHERS**
4 **AND POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS.**

5 (a) DEFINITION.—In this section:

6 (1) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The
7 term “institution of higher education” has the
8 meaning given such term in section 101 of the High-
9 er Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

10 (2) GRADUATE RESEARCHERS.—The term
11 “graduate researchers” means individuals enrolled in
12 a degree program leading to an advanced degree who
13 conduct research or teach in any discipline at an in-
14 stitution of higher education that is a recipient of
15 Federal funding.

16 (3) POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS.—The term
17 “postdoctoral researchers” means individuals in
18 training-focused positions who have received a doc-
19 toral degree or equivalent and receive stipends or
20 other compensation to conduct research in any dis-
21 cipline at an institution of higher education that is
22 a recipient of Federal funding.

23 (4) PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR.—The term
24 “principal investigator” means an individual who is
25 a project or proposal leader with respect to a re-

1 search grant at an institution of higher education
2 that is a recipient of Federal funding.

3 (5) FEDERAL RESEARCH AGENCY.—The term
4 “Federal research agency” has the meaning given
5 such term in section 223(d)(4) of the William M.
6 (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization
7 Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (42 U.S.C. 6605(d)(4)).

8 (b) OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY
9 GUIDELINES.—

10 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than six months
11 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Di-
12 rector of the Office of Science and Technology Pol-
13 icy, in consultation with the National Science and
14 Technology Council, the Committee on STEM, the
15 President’s Council of Advisors on Science and
16 Technology (PCAST), institutions of higher edu-
17 cation, graduate researchers and postdoctoral re-
18 searchers, principal investigators from across career
19 stages, labor representatives, mental health experts,
20 and other relevant stakeholders, shall develop a con-
21 sistent set of policy guidelines for Federal research
22 agencies to address mentoring and mental wellness
23 of graduate researchers and postdoctoral research-
24 ers, including by providing Federal research agencies
25 with additional reports to inform grant awards.

1 (2) CONSIDERATIONS.—In developing the policy
2 guidelines under paragraph (1), the Director of the
3 Office of Science and Technology Policy shall include
4 guidelines that—

5 (A) define what behaviors constitute bul-
6 lying and harassment at institutions of higher
7 education to build consistency among Federal
8 research agencies' definitions relating thereto;

9 (B) develop an operational definition of
10 mentorship for use at institutions of higher
11 education;

12 (C) address opportunities to discourage
13 and mitigate problematic behavior and negative
14 mentorship experiences, including through—

15 (i) requiring institutions of higher
16 education to submit to Federal research
17 agencies annual reports on incidents of
18 bullying and harassment;

19 (ii) requiring Federal research agen-
20 cies to implement standardized mecha-
21 nisms for graduate researchers and
22 postdoctoral researchers to safely and con-
23 fidentially report to such agencies incidents
24 of bullying or harassment or negative
25 mentorship experiences; and

1 (iii) requiring Federal research agen-
2 cies to implement accountability systems
3 that can be imposed if a principal investi-
4 gator or senior grant personnel is found
5 responsible for harassment, bullying, or
6 other behaviors that could contribute to
7 poor mental wellness;

8 (D) address opportunities to strengthen
9 mentor-mentee relationships, including by—

10 (i) requiring principal investigators to
11 submit mentoring plans that are aligned
12 with best practices with any grant applica-
13 tions to Federal research agencies that
14 may be used to support research conducted
15 by graduate researchers or postdoctoral re-
16 searchers;

17 (ii) requiring principal investigators to
18 submit a list of public and guaranteed ben-
19 efits for all graduate researchers and
20 postdoctoral researchers with funding ap-
21 plications to Federal research agencies, in-
22 cluding salary levels, leave policies, and
23 health care options, including mental
24 health;

1 (iii) requiring institutions of higher
2 education receiving funding from Federal
3 research agencies to describe their
4 mentorship systems, including any systems
5 in place to incentivize and reward effective
6 mentorship and methods in place to evalu-
7 ate mentorship and any systems to dis-
8 courage inadequate mentorship;

9 (iv) requiring Federal research agen-
10 cies to incorporate evaluation of a principal
11 investigator's recent service and
12 mentorship contributions into funding de-
13 terminations, taking into account relative
14 institutional support and time in position;

15 (v) requiring Federal research agen-
16 cies to include explicit funds for mentoring
17 activities within research grants, including
18 for mentor training programs, and profes-
19 sional development opportunities;

20 (vi) making public recommendations
21 for process and outcome measures that can
22 be used to evaluate mentorship progress
23 and a principal investigator's continued
24 learning, competency, and implementation

of effective and inclusive mentoring practices within a grant-funded project; and

(vii) making recommendations to Federal research agencies and institutions of higher education to help reduce administrative burdens on principal investigators to increase time for developing and implementing effective and inclusive mentoring practices; and

(E) address opportunities to improve the mental wellbeing of graduate researchers and postdoctoral researchers, including by—

(i) requiring institutions of higher education receiving funding from Federal research agencies to report to such agencies methods to provide support for international graduate researchers and international postdoctoral researchers;

(ii) requiring institutions of higher education receiving funding from Federal research agencies to report to such agencies institutional protections and supports for graduate researchers and postdoctoral researchers experiencing mental health problems and systems for ensuring grad-

1 uate researchers and postdoctoral research-
2 ers are made aware of such protections
3 and supports;

4 (iii) requiring principal investigators
5 and institutions of higher education receiv-
6 ing funding from Federal research agencies
7 to report to such agencies support systems
8 for underrepresented and minority grad-
9 uate researchers and postdoctoral research-
10 ers with grant applications to such agen-
11 cies;

12 (iv) requiring Federal research agen-
13 cies to provide explicit funding opportuni-
14 ties to cover permanent research staff sala-
15 ries;

16 (v) requiring institutions of higher
17 education receiving funding Federal re-
18 search agencies to ensure access to quality,
19 affordable physical and mental health care
20 for graduate researchers and postdoctoral
21 researchers; and

22 (vi) making recommendations for Fed-
23 eral research agencies and institutions of
24 higher education receiving funding from
25 such agencies to ensure financial security

1 of graduate researchers and postdoctoral
2 researchers.

3 (3) APPLICATION.—

4 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the Of-
5 fice of Science and Technology Policy shall en-
6 courage and monitor efforts of Federal research
7 agencies to develop, adopt, and implement poli-
8 cies based on the policy guidelines under para-
9 graph (1).

10 (B) CONSISTENCY.—To the extent prac-
11 ticable, the policies developed, adopted, and im-
12 plemented pursuant to subparagraph (A) shall
13 be consistent with other relevant standards and
14 laws as determined by the Director of the Office
15 of Science and Technology Policy.

16 (C) FEDERAL RESEARCH AGENCY IMPLE-
17 MENTATION.—Not later than one year after re-
18 ceiving the policy guidelines under paragraph
19 (1), the head of each Federal research agency
20 shall—

21 (i) develop and implement policies
22 with respect to the mental health of grad-
23 uate researchers and postdoctoral research-
24 ers that are consistent with such policy
25 guidelines; and

1 (ii) broadly disseminate such policies
2 to past and current recipients of, and ap-
3 plicants for, research and development
4 awards made by such agency.

5 (4) UPDATES.—The Director of the Office of
6 Science and Technology Policy shall update the pol-
7 icy guidelines under paragraph (1) every five years
8 as new data collected under subsection (d) is avail-
9 able to provide metrics for evaluation and best prac-
10 tices.

11 (5) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the
12 date after the guidelines are developed pursuant to
13 paragraph (1) and not later than one year after each
14 update pursuant to paragraph (4), the Director of
15 the Office of Science and Technology Policy shall
16 submit to the Committee on Science, Space, and
17 Technology, the Committee on Education and the
18 Workforce, and the Committee on Energy and Com-
19 merce of the House of Representatives and the Com-
20 mittee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
21 and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor,
22 and Pensions of the Senate a report containing in-
23 formation relating to the following:

1 (A) The policy guidelines under paragraph
2 (1), and the updates under paragraph (4), as
3 the case may be.

4 (B) Progress on the implementation of
5 such guidelines by Federal research agencies.

6 (d) DATA ON MENTAL HEALTH OF GRADUATE RE-
7 SEARCHERS AND POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS.—The
8 Director of the National Science Foundation, in collabora-
9 tion with the Director of the National Institutes of Health,
10 shall conduct and publish biennial evaluations of the state
11 of mental health of graduate researchers and postdoctoral
12 researchers (disaggregated, to the extent practicable, by
13 demographics).

14 (e) GAO STUDY.—Not later than three years after
15 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller
16 General of the United States shall submit to the Com-
17 mittee on Science, Space, and Technology, the Committee
18 on Education and the Workforce, and the Committee on
19 Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives
20 and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transpor-
21 tation and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor,
22 and Pensions of the Senate a report that—

23 (1) outlines implemented guidelines under sub-
24 section (b) and analyzes the effectiveness of such
25 guidelines;

1 (2) includes recommendations on potential
2 changes to practices and policies to improve such
3 guidelines and such implementation; and

4 (3) includes recommendations on additional
5 data collection and research needed to monitor
6 progress on improving mental health and wellness of
7 graduate researchers and postdoctoral researchers.

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